

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 477

FL 023 809

AUTHOR Kari, James, Ed.
TITLE Tatl'ahwt'aenn Nenn' = The Headwaters People's Country. Narratives of the Upper Ahtna Athabaskans.
INSTITUTION Alaska Univ., Fairbanks. Alaska Native Language Center.
REPORT NO ISBN-1-55500-000-2
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 228p.; "Translated by Katie John and James Kari."
AVAILABLE FROM Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks, P.O. Box 900111, Fairbanks, AK 99775-0120.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - General (020) -- Books (010) -- Multilingual/Bilingual Materials (171)
LANGUAGE English; Ahtna
EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Alaska Natives; American Indian Languages; Athapascan Languages; *Folk Culture; *Land Settlement; Land Use; Language Patterns; Maps; *Oral History; Oral Tradition; Photographs; Regional Dialects; Sociocultural Patterns; *Tales; Uncommonly Taught Languages
IDENTIFIERS Ahtna; Alaska

ABSTRACT

The collection of 21 narratives of the Tatl'ahwt'aenn (Upper Ahtna, or Headwaters People) of Alaska focuses on stories about historical events and traditional territory. The stories are told by six elders in Upper Ahtna, one of four dialects of Ahtna, an Athabaskan language. An introductory section offers background information on the population, its history, and the stories. The stories are divided into two sections: stories of Upper Ahtna history and culture, and stories of Upper Ahtna territory and land use. Each section contains an introduction and cultural and linguistic notes as well as the texts. Each text is prefaced by notes on the storyteller and/or the context of the tale, and includes a line-by-line English translation. Maps and photographs illustrate the texts. Contains 46 references. (MSE)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED 395 477



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality

- Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL
IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Michael
Krauss

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2

F1023809

Tatl'ahwt'aenn Nenn'

The Headwaters People's Country



Mendaes Menn' (Mentasta Lake) and the mountain *Tuu Ts'em* 'The One on the Water Side'.
Photo by Priscilla Russell Kari.

Tat'ahwt'aenn Nenn'

The Headwaters People's Country

Narratives of the Upper Ahtna Athabaskans

Told by
Katie John
Fred John, Sr.
Adam Sanford
Huston Sanford
Jack John Justin
Nicholas A. Brown

Transcribed and edited by
James Kari

Translated by
Katie John and James Kari

Alaska Native Language Center
University of Alaska
Fairbanks
1986

Alaska Native Language Center
Box 900111
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, AK 99775-0120

© 1985 Alaska Native Language Center
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

First printing 1986 500 copies
Second printing 1988 1,000 copies

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Main entry under title:

Tat'l'ahwt'aenn nenn' = The headwaters people's country.

Bibliography: p.

1. Ahtena Indians—Legends. 2. Ahtena Indians—History. 3. Indians of North America—Alaska—Legends. 4. Indians of North America—Alaska—History. 5. Ahtena language—Texts. I. John, Katie. II. Kari, James M. III. Alaska Native Language Center. IV. Title: Headwaters people's country.
E99.A28T38 1985 398.2'08997 85-72828
ISBN 1-55500-000-2 (pbk.)

The name /'ätnu, 'ätnu/ is spelled *Ahtna* by the Ahtna people; however, this name has also been spelled *Ahtena* and *Atna*.

The University of Alaska is an EO/AA employer and educational institution.

Their history, so far as *their* records are concerned,
will always be a closed book.

—Lt. Henry T. Allen, 1887

C'edan'a tnaey 'iinn hnehdelghosi medicine dadilaen ts'en'.
When the people of the past talked it sounded like medicine.

—Fred John, 1984

About the Cover Paintings

The paintings by Molly John Galbreath on the front and back covers are part of a series she has done according to her memory of the sites of the three main Upper Ahtna villages of the early twentieth century.

The front cover depicts the village of *Mendaesde*, 'Shallows Lake Place' (Mentasta), in the summer of 1935, when the village was located at Mentasta Lake outlet. The house in the foreground belonged to Fred and Katie John. On the creek are a bridge and a fish trap site. Across the creek is the house of Mentasta Sam and Lucy. Cabins that belonged to Little John, Big Frank and Jesse, Single-eye, Maggie John, (vacant), and Guy and Mary John (Molly's parents) line the lake. This site was abandoned in 1952 when the present village of Mentasta was founded on the north shore of the lake.

The upper back cover shows the village of *Bes Ce'e*, 'Big Bank' (New Suslota), in the fall of 1945. The tent was Lucy Justin's. The cabins, left to right, belonged to Sanford Charley, Guy John, Frank Sanford, Alec John, and Shorty Frank. Suslota was abandoned in 1947.

The lower back cover painting depicts the view to the south from the village of *Nataelde*, 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulnetas), in the summer of 1936. On the creek are a bridge and fish trap site. The house to the left belonged to Tommy Jackson; the one to the right was Sanford Charley's. The tent frames were used by visitors during the summer salmon run. In the distance are the mountains called *K'et'acm*, mounts Wrangell and Sanford.

Contents

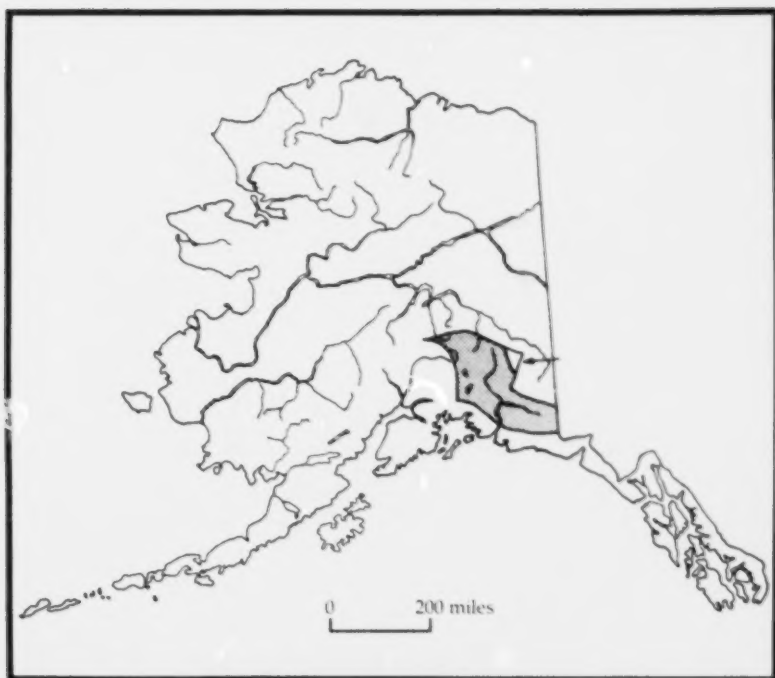
Preface	ix
Introduction	1
1903 Mendenhall and Schrader Map	4
I. STORIES OF UPPER AHTNA HISTORY AND CULTURE	
Introduction to Section I	9
Tat'l'ah Nem' Map	10
The Headwaters Country Map	11
Chapter 1	
Mendaes Dzele', Mentasta Mountain	13
Ahtna Chiefs' Titles	15
Chapter 2	
Tat'l'ahet'aenn Kenaage', The Headwaters People's Language	16
Ahtna Territory Map	18
Ahtna Dialects	19
Chapter 3	
Tat'l'ahet'aenn Kaska', The Headwaters People's Chiefs	21
Sanford Charley, 1876-1945	25
Chapter 4	
Dae' Tsatkaats, How We Were Trained	27
Batzulnetas Potlatch	35
Chapter 5	
Detlaen 'l'mm Ghaye 'Utni Ts'en, Regarding One's Friends	37
Chapter 6	
Cetaenn Nalaen'de, When the Tailed Ones Were Seen	39
Chapter 7	
Kekotcenn' Kaghalt'sim 'l'mm, The People Who Came Out of 'On the Flat' (Midway Lake)	47
Chapter 8	
Tsaa' Koas C'eghaan T'haen'de, When 'He Trains the Chinook Wind' Made War	59
Chapter 9	
Skasnaey Tsaa Hghitka'an'de, When the Aleuts Burned Caches	69
Chapter 10	
Lazen 'l'mm Nataekle Ghadghaande, When Russians Were Killed at 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulnetas)	75
Loanwords and Upper Ahtna Contacts with Other Peoples	87
Chapter 11	
Men Ugg'aann' Cdilaen'de Kadghaande, When They Were Killed at 'Lake That Has an Arm' (Kluane Lake)	89
The Wrangell Map of 1839	104
Chapter 12	
Seldaedze' 'l'mm St'laa Caeyge Ghadghaande, When Soldiers Were Killed at Slana	107

Chapter 13	
<i>Lieutenant Allen Nen'ke Tezyaade, When Lieutenant Allen Came into the Country</i>	115
Chapter 14	
<i>Tseh Nondlae Nen' Kakezdaetlde, When White People First Came into the Country</i>	123
Chapter 15	
<i>Nanset Tanuu Ket Ketminits'ude, Out on a Windswept Island</i>	127
II. STORIES OF UPPER AHTNA TERRITORY AND LAND USE	
Introduction to Section II	153
Chapter 16	
<i>Tene Kayahrodilt'aende, Trail Markers</i>	156
Powell on Trail Signs	159
Chapter 17	
<i>Cuka Ts'ul'aen'i gha Nen' Ta'stedel dze', How We Went Hunting Out in the Country</i>	161
Chapter 18	
<i>Natael Nenn', The Batzulnetas Country</i>	181
Salmon Fisheries Map	190
Upper Ahtna Salmon Fisheries	191
Chapter 19	
<i>Mendaes Nenn', Shallows Lake Country</i>	194
Chapter 20	
<i>Naabia Tlaat, Upper Nabesna River</i>	208
Chapter 21	
<i>Taghael dze' Tene, The Trail to Taral</i>	213
References	217

Preface

My work with the Ahtna language and with the Upper Ahtna dialect began in 1974. The stories in this collection were tape-recorded between 1981 and 1984. Transcriptions and translations were done in 1983-85. After the first stories were transcribed and proofread, the principal narrators, Fred and Katie John, expanded upon many specific details and added other stories to the collection. All of the transcripts were proofread and translated with Katie John. Considerable effort has been made by the narrators and myself to verify translations, to identify the precise locations of the more than 370 Native place names mentioned, to identify the principal characters in the historical stories, and to establish a relative chronology among the stories.

My thanks go to the six storytellers: Katie John, Fred John, the late Adam Sanford, Huston Sanford, Jack John Justin, and Nicholas A. (Andy) Brown. I would like to thank several other persons who helped with proofreading, translating, and the mapping of place names. They are Bell Joe, Maggie Joe, Kate Sanford, Jim McKinley, Molly Galbreath, Robert John, Gene Henry, Doris Charles, Elizabeth Pete and Walter Charley. I also want to thank all the people of the village of Mentasta for their kindness and encouragement. I am grateful to Lorraine Basnar for her editorial work with the manuscript and to Priscilla Russell Kari, Shari Sirkin, and Jane McGary for comments on earlier drafts of the stories. I also thank the Alaska Historical Commission, who sponsored some of the work in 1984.



Ahtna Territory within Alaska

Arrow indicates Upper Ahtna region, *Tatlah Nem'*, within overall Ahtna territory.

Introduction

This is a collection of twenty-one narratives of the *Tat'ahwt'aenn*, 'The Headwaters People', or the Upper Ahtna. At the direction of the two principal narrators, Fred and Katie John, I have focused on stories about historical events and traditional territory. This book includes only a small selection from the rich Upper Ahtna oral tradition. These narratives show that Upper Ahtna history spans at least 2,000 years,¹ and that the Upper Ahtna have played a major role in both the ancient and modern history of the general region, particularly as specialists in warfare. It appears that this 'Headwaters Country', with its complex system of mountain passes through the Alaska Range and its resources of salmon and game, was an area of special geopolitical importance.

Upper Ahtna is one of four dialects of Ahtna, the Athabaskan language of Alaska's Copper River region. (The other dialects are Central, Lower, and Western. See chap. 2, and Buck and Kari 1975.) The *Tat'ahwt'aenn* territory encompasses some of the most scenic parts of Alaska. This area comprises the upper Copper River above the mouth of the Slana River, which drains the north slopes of the Wrangell Mountains; the Slana River valley, which extends from the central Alaska Range; the Mentasta Mountains; and the upper Tok River, which drains into the Tanana River.

The first historic contact in this area may have occurred as early as 1794-95 when several Russians were killed at Batzulnetas (see chap. 10). Wrangell's 1839 report (1980:52) contains the first published reference to the "Copper Galtan." In 1885, Lt. Henry T. Allen was the first American to contact the Upper Ahtna (see chap. 13). He referred to them as the "Tatlantan," who numbered 117 (Allen 1887:128).² At that time there were three separate chieftainships in the territory (see chap. 3). It is quite certain that there were no non-Natives residing in the area until after the 1898 gold rush. Today, Mentasta is the only Ahtna village within the traditional territory.

The stories are divided into two groups. The fifteen narratives in the first section are about major events in the prehistory and history of the Upper Ahtna. There are also examples of potlatch oratory and autobiography, a listing of the succession of Upper Ahtna chiefs, and a discussion of the Native language relationships in the general region. The six narratives in the second section are about the traditional territory of the Upper Ahtna, emphasizing Native place names, trail systems, and land use in the early twentieth century. In the introductions to sections I and II there is further discussion on Ahtna history and geog-

¹ I suggest the figure of 2,000 years based upon my reading of the relative distances in the Athabaskan languages in the area, and our present knowledge of the regional historical traditions. Workman (1977) and Shinkwin (1979) provide overviews of Ahtna archaeology. They state that Ahtna occupation of the Copper River can be recognized in the present archaeological record for 1,000 years before present. There is little firm evidence yet on earlier Ahtna prehistory, but there are hints of greater antiquity. The very early 9,000-12,000 year-old Denali Complex remains, from the Tangle Lakes area at the northern margin of the Ahtna language area, are not directly linked to the Ahtna (and Athabaskan) remains of the past 1,000 years and may or may not represent early Athabaskan remains (Hadleigh-West, 1981). The Ahtna apparently do not have any historical tradition of non-Athabaskans living in the Copper River area.

² Allen (1887:128) used the term "Midnoosky" for the Ahtna south of the Tazlina River, and "Tatlantan" for those north of the Tazlina. This is incorrect according to the Ahtnas' own designation of band divisions. Thus Allen's population figure includes people who were living in the Gulkana and Gakona areas.

raphy. For perspective, I have provided notes on the many interrelated facts in these narratives and references to several other sources on the anthropology and ethnohistory of eastern Alaska.

The stories are presented in alternating lines of Ahtna and English, in contrasting typefaces. This format allows for close comparison of the Ahtna and the English. It is my hope that this format will stimulate people to learn to read and speak Ahtna and also to develop an appreciation for the remarkable feats of memorization that are represented in the narratives. When Native place names are mentioned, the English line gives a translation of the Native name followed in parentheses by its current map name or location; for example, *Nataelde*, 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulnetas). This policy gives priority to the oral place names and exposes nonspeakers of Ahtna to the informative and poetic meanings of the names.

There are, unfortunately, very few published sources of Native accounts of Alaska's history.³ It has taken 100 years for the first Native account of the Allen expedition to appear in print! Now, in the late twentieth century, when the survival of the languages that carry these rich oral traditions is very much in doubt, it is important that the Native words of the storytellers be recorded. This is the only way these traditions can be presented with eloquence and integrity. This also allows for measuring the accuracy of translation. With materials such as these from the Upper Ahtna tribal historians, we who have come to Alaska from other places can begin to appreciate the scope of the occupation of Alaska by human populations.

³ A recent book, entitled *A History of Alaskan Athapascans* (Simeone, 1982), addresses Athabaskan contact as portrayed by colonial newcomers. Little history as told by Athabaskan peoples is presented.



Chief Nickolai of Chistochina, his older sister *Tsiltsez*, and Jesse Nickolai, in 1937. Photo courtesy of Walter Phillips.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



1903 Mendenhall and Schrader Map

1903 Mendenhall and Schrader Map

This map from Mendenhall and Schrader's 1903 geological report, *The Mineral Resources of the Mount Wrangell District, Alaska*, was the first detailed map of this area of Alaska. Many of the local English and Native-origin names and trails mentioned throughout this book appear on the map. See also the the local Ahtna place names maps (pp. 10-11), the map of Ahtna dialects (p. 18), and the 1839 Wrangell map (p. 104).

I.

Stories of Upper Ahtna
History and Culture

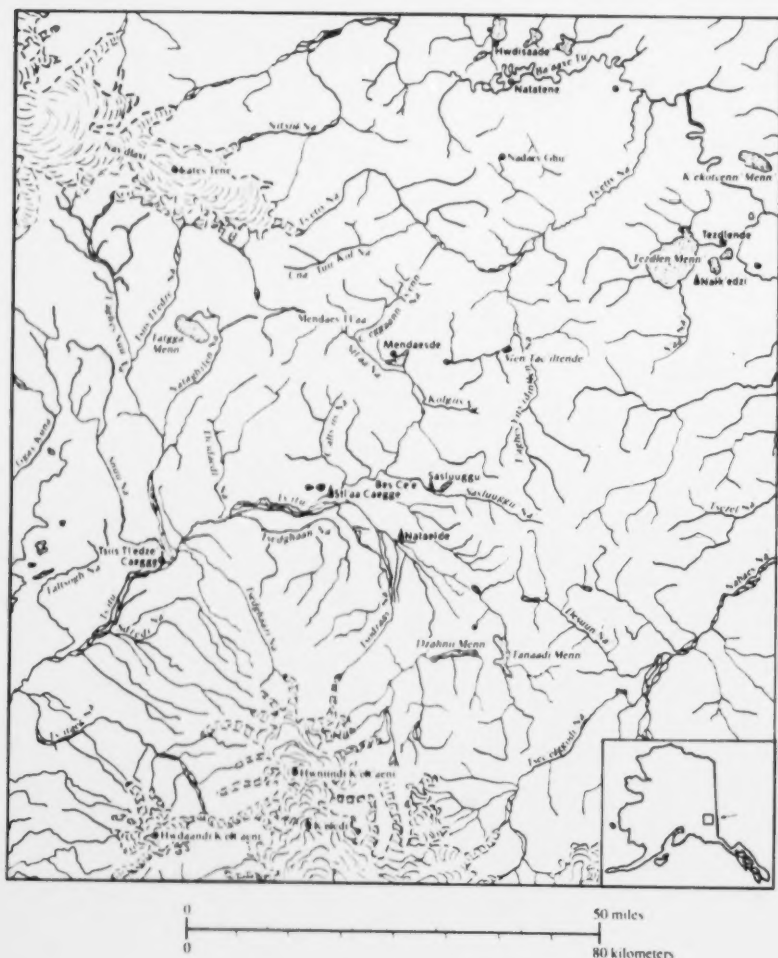
Introduction to Section I

There are many different genres of verbal art in the Athabaskan oral tradition. Most of the recent publications of Athabaskan stories in Alaska have been of legends and myths. However, in Ahtna, Tanaina, Koyukon, and several other Athabaskan languages with which I am familiar, I find that there is one fundamental difference in types of stories. Stories that are regarded as history take place at specific named places, whereas stories that are mythical or legendary usually are not set in specific locations. The *Cet'aenn* story about the ape-men with long tails (chap. 6), is viewed by the Ahtna as an actual historic event that occurred near the site of *Nataelde* (Batzulnetas). On the other hand, the numerous Ahtna *yenidan'a* stories, as are collected in Billum (1979) and Tansy (1982), involving *Saghaniggaay* (Raven) and *Ciil Hweyaa* (Fox or Lynx), are mythical and are not associated with specific places. I suggest that it is this geographical context that forms the basis for the Ahtna distinction between myth and history.

There is now sufficient depth to the record of Upper Ahtna historical narratives that we can construct an approximate chronology of the pre-contact history and post-contact history of the past two centuries.¹ The *Cet'aenn* story, (chap. 6) seems to be the oldest story because it is the only story in this collection that mentions a time when the *Tat'ahut'aenn* did not occupy their present territory. The next oldest story is the first of the three *'Alts'en'* *Tuacy* clan history stories (chap. 7). (There are many other clan history stories in the Ahtna, Upper Tanana, and Tanacross language areas which have not yet been documented.) The sequence of chiefs' names and the approximate dates of their deaths (chap. 3) was recorded as the later stories were translated. The earliest story that can be dated through genealogies and historic records is the killing of the Russians at Batzulnetas (chap. 10), which may have happened in the winter of 1794-95. The vivid detail in this story is an excellent demonstration of Fred and Katie John's skills as tribal historians. After the Batzulnetas story, the events of the nineteenth century can be ordered by referring to the succession of chiefs. The last story in this section, *Nanset Tanuu K'et Ketninit's'ide*, 'Out on a Windswept Island', by Fred John, is autobiographical. The provocative metaphorical language of this story is an example of the so-called "chief's language" at its best.

These are the first published versions of these stories in a Native language of eastern Alaska. They do not represent a "complete" record of Upper Ahtna historical stories, as many other ancient and recent historical stories remain unrecorded. Since many of these stories are also known by speakers of the other Ahtna dialects, and speakers of Tanacross and Upper Tanana, it is important that other Native language versions of these stories be documented so that other opinions can be heard and episodes and details can be compared and better understood.

¹ If these stories were to be published separately, as was the 1973 account by the Johns (recorded by Strong) of the killing of the Russians at Batzulnetas, the texture of this historical tradition would not be apparent. There would also be greater possibility for single events to be misinterpreted. For example, Strong assumed incorrectly that the Batzulnetas incident happened in 1848, whereas in fact it probably happened in 1794-95.

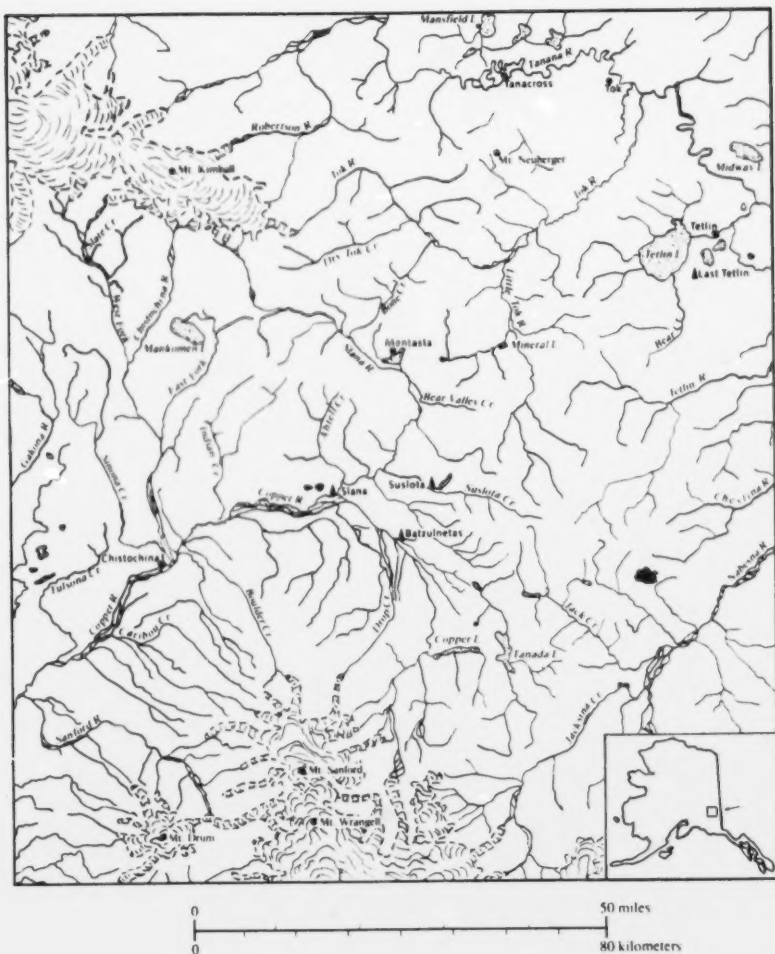


Tatl'ah Nenn'

Ahtna place names for features in or near the Upper Ahtna dialect area.

• indicates presently inhabited sites. † indicates abandoned sites.

Map by Karen Pearson and Lorraine Basnar.



The Headwaters Country

Established place names for features in or near the Upper Ahtna dialect area, based on U.S. Geological Survey maps. • indicates presently inhabited sites. ▲ indicates abandoned sites.

Map by Karen Pearson and Lorraine Basnar.



Fred and Katie John, with *Mendaes Dzele'* (Mentasta Mountain) in the background, 1985.
Photo by James Kari.

1

Mendaes Dzele'

Mentasta Mountain

Fred John

In the Ahtna language area, as well as in the neighboring Upper Tanana and Tanacross areas, each major village has (or had) a hill or mountain that is regarded as sacred. These sacred places serve as ever-present symbols of the people's ties to their land and their ancestors. Fred John, who has the title Mendaes Ghaxen 'The Person of Shallotes Lake', demonstrates how these sacred places are used in potlatch oratory.¹

Mendaes Dzele' su netsiye 'iinn k'etf'aat.
'Shallows Lake Mountain' (Mentasta Mountain) is what remains of our grandfathers.

U'aax ts'en' k'adii ts'edelts'ii.
Now we stay beneath it.

Netsehne yen 'iinn su nekaskae' xeyighil'aen'.
Our ancestors had it as their chief.

Nekaek'ae tah yidi k'e xu nt'aey.
It is the same as our home.

Mendaes Dzele' su xona c'aadze 'iinn kaskae it'aax ts'en' ghida' ts'en'.
A chief of the opposite clan stayed beneath Mentasta Mountain.

K'adii ut'aax ts'edelts'ii.
Now we live beneath it.

Yii c'a xona nekaskae' nlaen.
It, then, is our chief.

Xona yii gha c'a yet dzet dae' koniix.
This, then, is what we say about this mountain.

Bes c'a cu ubes ta c'ena' Bes Nezdaayi yii c'a cu.
There is a riverbank, too, the 'Bank That Extends' along the (Copper) river.

nadaat Copper Center 'udaat, ubes xanoox yae' ninilaade.
down at Copper Center, the bank that extends up the river.

Yii c'a xona 'udaat Copper Center, xona cilkaey 'iinn yen 'iinn it'aax ts'en'.
That (bank) down at Copper Center, now the young men, they are beneath it.

¹ See section on Ahtna chiefs' titles, this chapter

Detsiye 'iinn k'etl'aa it'aax ts'en' canelyaa.
They stay humbly beneath the remains of their grandfathers.

Dae' utdatniil sunt'aey.
This is what will be said.

Nanaat Nadaey Ghu' su
Across there at 'Marmot Tooth' (Mt. Neuberger)

k'adii gaat gaade Tanacross koht'aenn 'iinn.
now here are the Tanacross people.

Nuhwtsiye 'iinn k'etl'aat nanaat dats'ii nuf'aen.
You still look at the remains of your grandfathers.

Yii c'a xona ut'aax ts'en' ut'aadze' xona koht'aenn 'olaen.
Being beneath it, you then are the people that depend on it.

Nuhwgha xeyilaak ts'en'.
They made this for you.

Nuhwtsiye 'iinn ini'aen'i yii su.
That is what your grandfathers looked at.

Xona yii, yii xona nuxon uk'edolt'aeyi nuxon.
That then, then that is what you can use.

Xona Mendaes Dzele' k'e k'ent'aey xu.
Thus it is just like 'Shallowes Lake Mountain'.

Yedu' nanaa k'adii dats'ii nuhts'en' beyahwnat'aen, stlaen 'iinn.
Now it still is visible to you there across the way, my friends.

Ahtna Chiefs' Titles

In Ahtna territory, the chiefs of at least twelve of the most important villages had an inherited chief's name that was based upon the place name of the village plus *denen* (or *deni* in Upper Ahtna) or *ghaxen* (or *ghaxa* in Upper Ahtna). A list of the recorded chief titles is presented here:

<i>Tats'abaelghi'aa Denen</i> 'Person of Where Spruce Stands in Water' (chief of village opposite Canyon Creek)	<i>Nic'akuni'aa Denen</i> 'Person of Where Land Extends Out' (chief of village south of Wood Camp)
<i>Hwet'aa Cae'e Denen</i> 'Person of Beneath (the mountains) Stream Mouth' (chief of Fox Creek village)	<i>Bendil Denen</i> 'Person of Where Stream Flows into Lake' (chief of Tazlina Lake)
<i>Taghael Denen</i> 'Person of Dike in Water' (chief of Taral)	<i>Hwacae'e Denen</i> 'Person of the River Mouth' (chief of site near Gulkana)
<i>C'elax Denen</i> 'Person of Fish Run Place' (chief of Long Lake village)	<i>Saltigi Ghaxen</i> 'Person of Saltigi' (chief of Tyone Lake)
<i>Sdaghaay Denen</i> 'Person of End of the Point' (chief of village on Copper River, north of mouth of Chetaslina River)	<i>Sil'aa Caege Ghaxen</i> 'Person of Rear River Mouth' (chief of Slana village)
<i>Tsedi Kulaen Denen</i> 'Person of Copper Place' (chief of Copper Village)	<i>Mendaes Ghaxen</i> 'Person of Shallows Lake' (chief of Mentasta)

Such a system of inherited titles is unusual for Alaska Athabaskans, although apparently the Upper Inlet Tanaina also had such a system.

While there are many other well-known prehistoric Ahtna village sites, it seems that only these places had titled chiefs. Seven of these titled chiefs were located in the lower Ahtna dialect area, one (Gulkana) is in the Central dialect, two (Tazlina and Tyone lakes) are in the West, and two (Slana and Mentasta) are in the Upper area. This configuration suggests that this naming system for chiefs was associated with the copper sources and workshops in the Chitina area, and, of course, with the major trail systems in the west, north, and east. Even though all but two of these villages are abandoned today, several of these titles are still held by Ahtna elders.

Tatl'ahwt'aenn Kenaeg'e' The Headwaters People's Language

Fred John

The Ahtna of the upper Copper River, whose villages are located on an extensive system of mountain passes, are intermediary among the neighboring Athabaskans. The Upper Ahtna have an impressive tradition of multilingualism. Most Upper Ahtna elders can speak the two distinct languages of the Tanana drainage—Upper Tanana and Tanacross—and they are familiar with the other dialects of Ahtna spoken down the Copper River and to the west. The Upper Ahtna often sing and dance with the Tanacross, Tetlin, and Northway people at Copper River potlatches. In this brief narrative Fred John summarizes the Upper Ahtnas' roles as interpreters and intermediaries.

Tsaay Hwt'aenn 'iinn

The 'Small Timber People' (Western Ahtnas of upper Gulkana and upper Susitna rivers)

nec'aaydze hnehdelghos xukenaey'.

speak differently from us, their language.

'Udaat Taghael gha hwts'en yihwts'en nec'aaydze hnehdelghos.

Downriver from 'Dike in Water' (Taral, near Chitina), from there they speak differently from us.

K'adiit k'adii xusdits'ak xu.

Now we can understand them.¹

Nek'e hnehdelghos.

They talk like us.

Dzel Tahwt'aenn 'iinn yen 'iinn cu kusden.

The 'Among the Mountains People' (Upper Tanana people of upper Nabesna, upper Chisana rivers) are separate.

Yen 'iinn xukenaey' sden daccdilaen.

Their language sounds different.²

Yet nasghu Knik (Dastnaey) yet cu xukenaey' xa'xu sdiits'ak xu.

Out there at Knik (the Tanaina), we can barely understand their language.

Nec'aaydze yi hnehdelghos.

They talk differently.³

¹ Ahtna elders say that the Ahtna dialects are more alike today than they were in the past, because the modern road system has facilitated visiting. Compare Katie John's and Lt. Henry Allen's comments on the Lower and Upper Ahtna language intelligibility in 1885 (chap. 13, n. 8).

² The Upper Nabesna dialect of the Upper Tanana language is represented in chap. 20.

³ The Dastnaey, the Dena'na (or Tanana) of Cook Inlet, and the Western Ahtna had a tradition of speaking and

Na'aat Tanacross, Northway, Tetlin, Dot Lake
Over at Tanacross, Northway, Tetlin, and Dot Lake

gha yen 'iinn nexon xusdits'ak xu K'etnahwt'aenn li'i xuhdists'agga.
we understand them but the 'On the River People' (lower Copper River Athnas) do not understand them.

Ba'ooxe Northway, Tanacross, Tetlin
Over at Northway, Tanacross, and Tetlin

yet c'a cu yet c'a cu K'etnahwt'aenn li'i xuhdists'agga.
they do not understand the lower Copper River people.

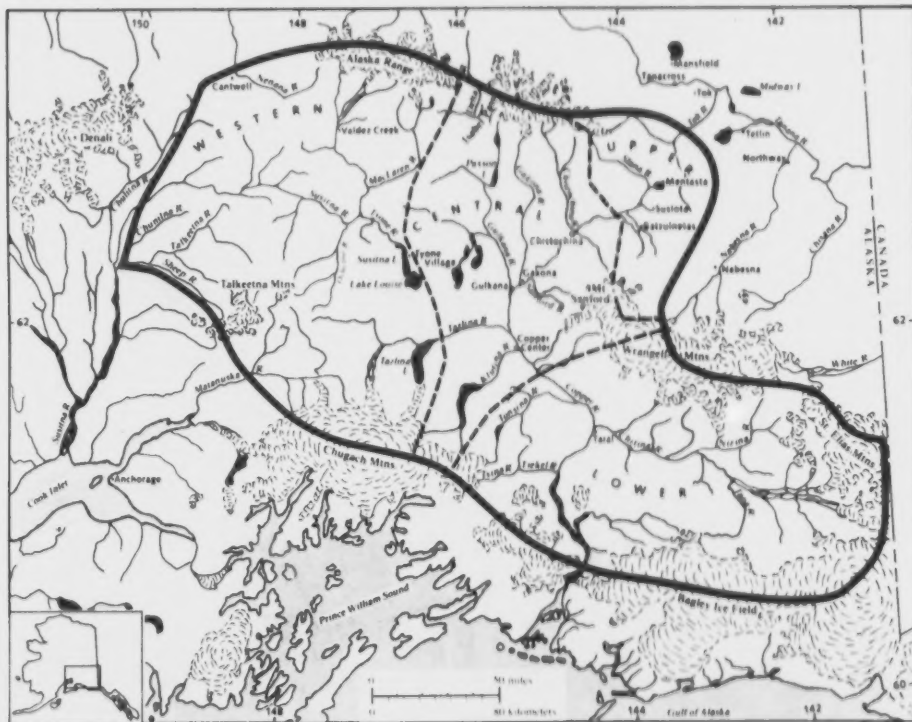
Nexon Mendaes Hwt'aenn
We from Mentasta

du' 'udaat Taghael 'ahwts'en xukenaey' ugheldze' sdits'ak.
can understand well as far down the river as Taral.

Na'aat Northway, Tetlin Mendaes Hwt'aenn 'iinn
Over at Northway and Tetlin we Mentasta people

yen 'iinn du' all dadaa' 'el da'ooxo xukenaey' sdits'ak.
can understand them going outside (toward the Tanana River) as well as downriver people (Athnas).

understanding each other's languages. Early in the period of Russian occupation the Russians employed Udena ma as agents and interpreters as they contacted the Athnas and other Athabaskans in interior Alaska. Note especially the role of C'uket Ta' in the 1794-95 incident in which Russians were killed at Batzultetus (chap. 10). His knowledge of both Upper Athna and Russian was central to the chain of events.



Ahtna Territory

Ahtna dialect divisions, along with outer boundary of Ahtna territory within Alaska.
Map by Karen Pearson and Lorraine Basnar.

Ahtna Dialects

This map of the Ahtna language area shows the outer boundaries of the language and the four dialect areas within Ahtna. Upper Ahtna is the smallest yet the most distinct of the Ahtna dialects. Both the pronunciation (the phonetics and phonology) and the vocabulary of the Upper Ahtna dialect reflect the long-term influence of the neighboring Upper Tanana and Tanacross languages.

The major pronunciation differences between Upper Ahtna and the three other dialects are as follows (Upper = U, Central = C, Lower = L, Western = W):

- 1) loss of glottalization in final glottalized consonants

'mittens'	'pottlatch'
<i>gets</i> (W)	<i>hætiitl'</i> (W)
<i>ge's</i> (C,L)	<i>hætiit'</i> (C,L)
<i>gets</i> (U)	<i>hætiitl</i> (U)
'fog'	
<i>aa</i> (C,L,W)	
<i>aak</i> (U)	

- 2) *b* becomes *m* when followed by a syllable final *n*

'lake'	'he swam up'
<i>ben</i> (C,L,W)	<i>kaghbiæn</i> (C,L,W)
<i>men</i> (U)	<i>kaghmaæn</i> (U)

- 3) *ɣl* [ɣ], a front velar fricative, occurs in a few words in U, but not elsewhere in Ahtna

'canoe'	'redpoll'
<i>tsəyɣl</i> (U)	<i>diniyɣl</i> (U)
	<i>diiŋ</i> (C,L,W)

- 4) final short vowels assimilate to become like the vowel in preceding syllable

'gaff hook'	'fin'
<i>saxi</i> (C,L,W)	<i>-t'oghe'</i> (C,L,W)
<i>saxa</i> (U)	<i>-t'ogho'</i> (U)

- 5) final short vowels are dropped from syllables ending in long vowel followed by *n*, *l*, *dl*, or *y*

'grandchild'	'rainbow'
<i>-tsuuyə</i> (C,L,W)	<i>sabiile'</i> (C,L,W)
<i>-tsuuy</i> (U)	<i>sabiil'</i> (U)

- 6) word-final long vowels followed by *n* are nasalized in Upper Ahtna, but are a "solid" *n* in the other dialects. This rule, combined with the deletion of final short vowels after *n* (rule 5), makes it necessary to distinguish between nasalized long vowels and long vowel plus *n* in the Upper Ahtna spelling system. Thus, in Upper

Ahtna, long vowel + *n* is nasalized, whereas long vowel + *nn* is a solid *n*

'food'	'child'
<i>c'aam</i> [c'aam] (C,L,W)	<i>sc'aen</i> [sc'aen] (C,L,W)
<i>c'aam</i> [c'aq] (U)	<i>sc'aen</i> [sc'aq] (U)
'mouse'	'The Tailed One'
<i>dluuni</i> (C,L,W)	<i>Cet'aeni</i> (C,L,W)
<i>dluunn</i> (U)	<i>Cet'aenn</i> (U)
'person'	'our country'
<i>koht'aene</i> (C,L,W)	<i>nenene</i> (C,L,W)
<i>koht'aenn</i> (U)	<i>nenenn</i> (U)

- 7) in verbs with the *gh-* prefix and a preceding prefix, such as *d* or *n* and a following *i*, the *gh* disappears

'he said'	'he saw him'
<i>dghine</i> (C,L,W)	<i>inghi'aen</i> (C,L,W)
<i>dine</i> (U)	<i>ini'aen</i> (U)

In addition to these differences in pronunciation, the Upper Ahtna dialect has many words not used elsewhere in Ahtna. Frequently these words are similar to words used in the Tanana River languages. For example, of the 75 Ahtna names for birds listed in the *Ahtna Noun Dictionary* (Buck and Kari, 1975), 25 of the Upper Ahtna names are distinct from the Central and Lower dialects, and similar to names used in Tanacross or Upper Tanana, e.g.

'common loon'	'rusty blackbird'
<i>dadzeni</i> (C,L)	<i>skoht'aex</i> (C,L)
<i>tadziiil</i> (U)	<i>ts'ekol'ak</i> (U)
<i>taadziiil</i> (Upper Tanana)	<i>ts'ekolch'ak</i> (Tanacross)

In the past, according to Fred and Katie John, the dialects of Mentasta and Batzulnetas-Slana differed. One trait of the turn-of-the-century Mentasta dialect seems to have been the fronting of the front velar series [k] to a palatal [ç] (a *ch* sound). Today, Fred John is the only living speaker of Upper Ahtna who is originally from Mentasta. When Michael Krauss first surveyed the Mentasta dialect with Fred in 1961, Fred pronounced words such as *-ce'* and *gets* ('tail' and 'mittens') as *-che'* and *jets*. Krauss proposed writing the Ahtna front velars as *c* and *c'* (as opposed to *k* and *k'*) to accommodate Fred's dialect and to make the orthography more closely resemble those of the neighboring Tanana River peoples; ironically, in the work with the Ahtna language of the past decade, Fred has only occasionally used the fronted *ch*, *ch'*, and *j* pronunciations. It seems that this fronting of the velars was an incipient change in Old Mentasta that reverted back to the velar pronunciation upon consolidation in recent years of the remaining speakers of Upper Ahtna.

Tat'ahwt'aenn Kaskae' The Headwaters People's Chiefs

Fred and Katie John

At the time of the earliest datable historical story in Tat'ahwt'aenn Nenn', 'The Headwaters People's Country' (the story in which Russians were killed at Batzulnetas in the winter of 1794-95; see chap. 10), there were four winter villages and three Upper Ahtna chieftainships. The Stl'aa Caegge-Nataelde (Slana-Batzulnetas) chief had territory on the upper Copper River from below the mouth of the Slana River to the headwaters, including Copper Lake and Tanada Lake. The Sasluuggu' (Suslota) chief was in charge of the passes and streams that drain into the lower Slana River. The Mendaesde (Mentasta) chief controlled the upper Slana and Tok rivers.

In this narrative, Fred John (present chief of Mentasta) and Katie John (daughter of Sanford Charley, the last chief of Batzulnetas) give a list of kaskae, or chiefs, for the three chieftainships in the upper Copper River area, extending as far back as they can reconstruct the sequence.¹ This is important information for ordering and dating the post-contact history of the area. Listed here for each chief is his Ahtna name, a translation of his personal name, his non-Native name, his clan, and (when known) the date of his death. Also, references are made to the stories in this book in which these chiefs are mentioned.² (See the introduction to chap. 5 for additional information on clans.)

Fred John (FJ):

Mendaesde kaskae' yen su Takol'iix Ta' xona netsiye.

A Mentasta chief was Takol'iix Ta' 'Father of Daylight over Water', our grandfather. (Russian John, C'ecael'yu, d. after 1850)³

¹ Strong (1972 chap. 3, pp. 25-27) gives a good account of the duties and qualities of the upper Copper River chief:

There are several grades of chiefs, a big chief whose influence extends over a village and may be strongly felt in a number of villages, little chiefs, or sub-chiefs, who have some people working for them, these may also be clan leaders, and the sleeping doctors or shamans, who have some degree of rank or influence. A man may be a chief or shaman at the same time, as was Batzulnetas, the chief at Batzulnetas, and the ranking man of the Upper Copper River in 1885.

To become a chief a man had to be a hard worker as he had to form some basis for his rank in wealth. But the key to the position of chief was the organization of the labour of his kinsmen. A chief would . . . tell them where to hunt, what work to be done, and so on. He would receive the game killed, and other fruits of his helpers' labour, and in turn he would feed them, find wives for them, and give them his aid and protection. The big chiefs also settled problems arising between the villagers. . . . Chiefs were distinguished from non-ranking men. . . . They lived in the special large lodge called a "chief's house", they wore long belts of . . . dentalium shell. . . . they were involved in the harsh labour of the winter hunting, . . . they could support and maintain two to four wives, and during the chief's speeches directed toward many topics, they spoke a special "chief's talk".

(Fred John's narratives in chaps. 5 and 15 are excellent examples of this "chief's talk".)

² Not listed here, but no doubt of equal status and importance in matrilineal Ahtna society, are the *kuy'aa*, the 'rich women', or female leaders.

³ See the description of Takol'iix Ta' in chap. 12. He was part Russian, being the descendant of a woman who was held at Nataelde in the winter of 1794-95. He was the main instigator in the killing of the Serebrennikov party in 1848.

Bii'ae bii'ae uk'etl'aa kaskae yighile'en, Menac'ulniis Ta'.
His son, his son was chief after him, Menac'ulniis Ta', 'Father of Another One Is Born'.
(Chief John, 'Alts'en' Tnaey, d. 1915) ⁴

Yen yae' telts'edi 'el cu uceli yen c'a kaskae ghile' ts'en', Kalts'el Ta'.
After he passed away his younger brother was chief, Kalts'el Ta', 'Father of His Time Is Short'. (Mentasta Sam, Naltsiinn, d. 1948) ⁵

Sasluuggu' du' Ggaan' Ggets Ta' yen kaskae ghile'.
At 'Small Salmon' (Suslota) Ggaan' Ggets Ta', 'Father of Crooked Arm', was chief.
(Dik'aagiyu, d. after 1885) ⁶

Katie John (KJ):

Yik'ets'en Sasluuggu' Ciil kaskae ghile'.
After him Sasluuggu' Ciil, 'Suslota Young Man', was chief.
(Dik'aagiyu, d. ca. 1910)

Yeldu' Suslota John kaskae ghile'.
Then Suslota John was chief.
(Udzisyu, d. 1925)

FJ:

Nataelde yetldu'
At 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulnetas)

Yalniil Ta' yen kaskae ghile'.
Yalniil Ta', 'Father of He Is Carrying It (wealth)', was chief.
(Alts'en' Tnaey, d. ca. 1825) ⁷

Yeldu' uk'etl'aat kaskae yighile'en yen du' bii'ae,
Then after him the chief was his son,

Ts'alnes, yen uk'etl'aat kaskae yighile'.
Ts'alnes, 'Someone Is Carrying a Blanket', was chief after him.
(Nitsisyu, d. before 1835)

Yik'ets'en xona kaskae cu naadle'e yen ldu' Dayaan Ggaay.
Afterwards there was the next chief, Dayaan Ggaay, 'Little Chief, Little Spokesman'.
(C'ecaelyu, d. before 1849) ⁸

⁴ This was Fred John's father. He also had a nickname, C'etiy Ghodi, 'Bent Old Man'. See chaps. 14 and 15.

⁵ Fred John neglects to say that he himself became chief of Mentasta in the 1940s. See his comment on the Mentasta chieftainship at this time in chap. 15. Fred is a member of the Tsisyu clan.

⁶ He was the chief of Suslota when Allen passed through in 1885. See chap. 13.

⁷ He was the chief and war leader in the 1794-95 incident in which a group of Russians was killed at Nataelde (chap. 10).

⁸ He was probably the chief during the Klunne Lake incident, chap. 11.

Yik'ets'en bii'ae 'El C'alnes Ta' uk'etl'aat kaskae naadle'.

Afterwards his son, 'El C'alnes Ta', 'Father of Wrapped in Cloth', was the next chief.

(Alts'en' Tnaey, d. 1883)⁹

Stl'aa Caegge munghae kaskae ghile' ts'en'

The older brother was chief at Slana and

gha yet Nataelde kazyaay yii gha yet kaskae naadle'.

he went up there to Batzulnetas and was the next chief.

Ucele Bets'ulnii Ta'

His younger brother, Bets'ulnii Ta' 'Father of Someone Respects Him',

(Alts'en' Tnaey, d. 1889)¹⁰

yen ldu' Stl'aa Caegge yet kaskae ghile'.

he was chief at 'Mouth of Rear River' (Slana).

KJ:

Yik'ets'en Ke' Koli, Banzaneta Billy utsiye, kaskae ghile'.

Afterwards Ke' Koli, 'No Feet', Banzaneta Billy's grandfather, was chief.

(Alts'en' Tnaey, d. ca. 1900)

Yeldu' Banzaneta Billy kaskae naadle'.

Then Banzaneta Billy was the next chief.

(Alts'en' Tnaey, d. 1942)¹¹

Yeldu' ik'etl'aat Sanford Charley yen kaskae nasdlaet.

Then Sanford Charley replaced him as chief.

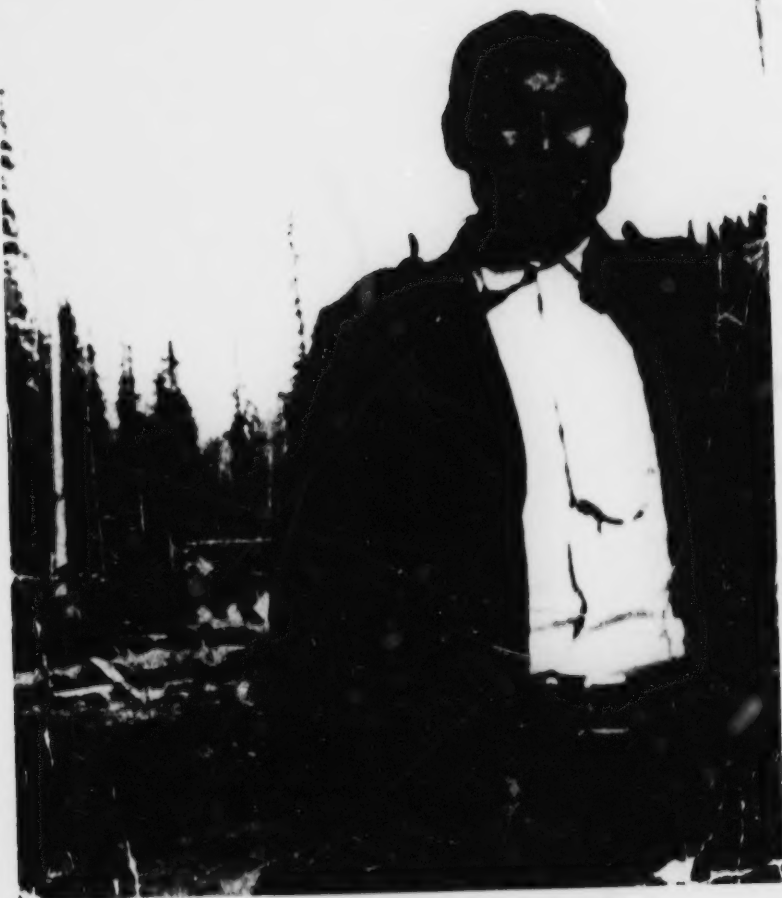
(Alts'en' Tnaey, d. 1945)¹²

⁹ He was chief during the Slana incident in 1848, chap. 12.

¹⁰ See Allen's 1885 description of this chief and shaman (chap. 13, note 3). Allen spelled his name Batzulneta and named his village Batzulnetas. In the local area this place name is said Banzaneta. Two incidents in which Russians were killed took place in the Slana-Batzulnetas chieftainship (see chaps. 10 and 12).

¹¹ Banzaneta Billy was Gene Henry's father. Gene Henry, one of the last former residents of Batzulnetas, now lives at Dot Lake.

¹² Katie John says that in the 1930s Sanford Charley and Banzaneta Billy had separate small villages. Charley's was located at Nataelde, a mile or so up Tanada Creek, and Billy's was located at C'ecaegge, at the mouth of Tanada Creek. See photos on pages 74 and 103.



Sanford Charley at Slana, 1942. Photo courtesy of Bell Joe.

Sanford Charley, 1876-1945

Sanford Charley was one the major figures in eastern Alaska at that critical period of change for the Native peoples, from prior to the gold rush of 1898 through the first four decades of this century. He was born at the mouth of the Sanford River in about 1876.

Sanford Charley's Ahtna name was '*izin Ta*'. Katie John considers the name to be untranslatable, but note that the word for 'gun' in Tanaina is '*izin*'. Also note that Sanford Charley's nickname was *Ggoye*', which is phonetically close to Tanaina *gguya*, 'little one'. In about 1899, he married *Nelggodi*, or Sarah, who was from Nabesna, and the first of their ten children, Lena, was born in 1901 or 1902. Sometime around 1932 Sanford Charley divorced his first wife and married Cassie John from Mentasta, and they had one child. Charley died in 1945.

Sanford Charley was very well known as a traveler and hunter. He had five cabins, one each at Slana, Nabesna, Sanford River, Chistochina, and Batzulnetas. He traveled on foot as far as Dawson, Fairbanks, and Anchorage. (See the photograph and description of Sanford Charley's potlatch, pp. 34-35; see also Strong 1972: chap. 6, pp. 39-40.)



Jennie and Huston Sanford with their grandchild, Marvin Sanford, 1985. Photo by James
Kari.

Dae' Ts'atk'aats How We Were Trained

Huston Sanford

Huston Sanford, Sanford Charley's son, here tells of traditional education, referring to the use of the stars for both practical and spiritual assistance.

Sc'aen ghale' ts'en, snaan 'el sta' el ne'el nakakolniiis.
Ever since I was a child, my mother and my father would tell us stories.

Nuxon kesdult'e'i gha ne'el nahkolniiis.
They used to tell us so that we would be independent.

Na'ooxo ne'el nalyas tah nadaexi 'en nenildaagga 'en ts'ezuux.
When it was snowing out there, we would shovel the snow away from our door.

Tsets cu nisdelaes.
We also gathered wood.

Tsets cu tasnitsael tah, "Udela' ts'en ugheldze' dghosu'!
When we chopped down trees, "Clean it off good from the top!

Uts'en kaskae yi'uhsiidi, "ne'ekenii.
If you do that you will become successful," they would tell us.

Ne'el nakakolniiis xu' ts'utsaede ugha' nanicstudaxi gha.
They used to tell us that in order to make us think about the ancient times.

"Ndaa nse' little nakozedi 'el xona koltsaen," ne'ekenii.
"In a while you will be fasting," they would tell us.¹

"'Ohdek'aas nuxon xa' kedult'e'i gha."
"You should train yourselves so that you can be independent."

Xona nek'ehwtedax xa',
When we were just waking up (they would tell us),

"Yikaas ts'en' cteltaes ts'en' ti'oltlet ts'en'.
"You hurry outside just as the morning light begins.

Nildaagga 'en datgge bikahwnol'iil.
At the doorway look up for it (the star-clock).²

¹ The puberty ritual was an important part of a young Ahtna man's or woman's training. They stayed in isolation, fasted, and observed many taboos. Similar rituals were also engaged in when a young couple had a child, or when an adult obtained spiritual power. The Upper Ahtna have extremely elaborate rules for counting days in this ritual cycle and for observing taboos.

² Although not mentioned by name, the object looked for is the morning star that was used as a clock. The star is considered both a time referent and a source of luck.

Taade bikahwnu'aen'de, yetde nuhwgha nicdalzes.
You should look for it three times, and then you will be fortunate.

Uk'e'e 'ulc'elde una'itu'ulnak.
If you delay, you will forget about it.

Nduu nahwnedeli 'el ta bina'olnes tah bati'oltlet.
After several days when you remember it again, you can run out for it.

'Utguu bikahwnof'iit.
Look up for it.

Yetde' nuhk'e nulta'i nuxon.
Then it will take care of you.

Xu'a bi'olnes xu' taagga hwneyelden.
You will still remember it after three days pass.

Yihwts'en se' nohyiits ugheldze' nitdalt's'el.
From then on your life will improve.

Ghalii n'el nets'en' tsetdalzes ts'en'.
Riches will come to us.

Ghalii yit stalts'el ts'en'.
We will be in wealth.

Yii ts'en ghalii kaskae yistazel."
We will be successful from it (the star)."

Dae' du' nenaan 'el neta' 'el ne'el nahkolniis.
That is what our mother and father used to tell us.

Ts'utsaede ne'el nakakolnigi 'el titaha banicdelneni.
They told us that long ago an orphan was blessed with good fortune.

Yen ts'en, yen ts'en nse' nahwdezet ts'en' yen xu'el nakalniis nts'e banicdelnen.
Some time had passed since then and he used to tell them how he became blessed.

Yii 'el yii ts'eni ketk'aas, titaha banicdelneni.
It was because of him that they (our parents) trained themselves, that orphan who was blessed with good fortune.

Bez'ae'y iinn xii'el yildaay netyaex.
His uncles were keeping him and raising him.

Gaxan dae' naal tidac'itaan xu' dyaak.
All of a sudden he had become worthless and sleepy.

Bez'ae ighilghal.
His uncle gave him a beating.

Du' 'unse' nadaegge ighilghal.
Later on he beat him a second time.

Du' taagga ghanihwdinitaan.
Then he did it a third time.

Taagga ighilghal.
He beat him three times.

Ket'iinidzen.
He (the orphan) got angry.

Na'ooxo scenta staniyaa tah xutah tsagh.
He went out under a tree and he cried.

Xutah tsagh deldaade kanaalighilt'ak.
As he stayed there crying he fell asleep.

Gaxan banicdelnen xona.
Then all of a sudden he became blessed.

Nek'eltaenn kiilniinn yen its'en' kenaes.
God spoke to him.¹

"Yidi gha 'itsaghi da?"
"Why are you crying?"

"Sez'ae sghilghal."
"My uncle beat me."

"Yidi gha nil'aen'i?"
"Why did he do that to you?"

"Tidac'estaann.
"I am worthless (he said).

Tsets n'el sdek'ent'ae ts'en' 'ael n'el sdek'ent'ae ts'en'.
(Cutting) wood is hard for me and trapping is hard for me.

Naal yaen' sdzelghaen.
Sleepiness is starting to kill me.

Igha' sghilghal."
That's why he beat me."

"Xona, xona ngha nicdulziisi.
"Well, you should be blessed with good luck.

Ngha nicdulziisi.
You should be blessed.

¹ The word Nek'eltaenn is now translated as God, but its literal meaning is 'the one that moves above us'. According to Katie John, before the white man's arrival, this word referred to a certain constellation of stars that looks like a man.

Sts'en' nilkediltaex."
Turn toward me.

Detedze' kaen' iyent'aa yeggot.
He (God) poked his (the orphan's) back with his cane.

Yihwts'en natkoy, natkoy, natkoy.
Then he (the orphan) vomited, and vomited, and vomited.

Taade iyent'aa yizggotden hwtsicdze' inaghalkoy.
When he poked him in the back the third time, he had vomited it all up.

"Du' gaann ts'en su tidac'itaann 'el.
"Well, it is because of this (impurity) that you have become so worthless.

Gaann ts'en skutnesi nzelghaey.
It is because of this that laziness is killing you.

Xona nez'ae ts'en' danghudya," yilnii.
Now you go back in to your uncle," he (God) told him.

Dez'ae dana'ideyaa.
He went back in to his uncle.

Neztaen.
He went to bed.

Dez'ae caghanta ts'inizet ts'en' ticnel'iin ts'en'.
He woke up while his uncle was sleeping and he sneaked outside.

Tsets 'uka 'unggu tsets kaghilkaadl.
Up above he chopped up some wood.

Tsets icdesu' ts'en'.
He limbed the tree.

Yikaas ts'en' c'altael.
The morning light was beginning.

Bez'ae ts'inizet.
His uncle woke up.

Yuka natdelnen.
He reached for him.

Gaa bazae kol.
His nephew was not there.

De'aat 'elnes.
He nudged his wife.

"Ncaay, tege nt'iinn?"

"Your poor grandchild, where is he?"

Ba'ooxo nildaagga tsets nadilt'ak.

He dropped some wood outside by the door.

"Ncaay, ncaay t'aen ts'en' tsets nadilt'ak!"

"Your grandchild is doing that! He dropped off some wood!"

Tsets dzaenn tsets tsaef.

All day he chopped wood.

Tsets t'ae' katmitsaell ts'en' dana'idyyaa.

He chopped up a load of wood and he came back in.

Yidi ggaay kiigha zdlaets.

They cooked a little food for him.

Kut'aa nicnikaan.

They served him.

Du' dazae ts'en' kenaes.

Then he (the uncle) spoke to his nephew.

Dazae "Xu' ugha' nts'e kensyaeyi yae' kedult'e'i gha.

(He said) "I spoke that way so that you would be on your own.

Nts'e kensyaesi gha sacts'en' da'il'aen'i gha.

That was not out of dislike for you.

Nghacni'estsen' xu nelghali."

I love you even though I beat you."

Sc'aen titaha gha nicdelneni.

That orphan child was blessed with luck.

'Ael n'el tsa' zes ta dzaenn nayadghaen.

Every day he packed skins back from the traps.

Nilkakuzdlaa ts'en' xona dez'ae hwtiitl gha.

He gathered things together for a potlatch for his uncle.

"Sez'ae, nghostiidl.

"My uncle, I am going to make a potlatch for you.

Koht'aenn ntaen 'iinn 'alden sa ninilae."

Get your friends together for me."

Hwtiitl yahwgi'aan.

The potlatch began.

Dez'ae ghitiitl.

He made a potlatch for his uncle.

Cu saen nakodlaex, xey 'el nakodlaex decen 'ael 'el stan'idyaa.

Another summer and winter passed, and he went out trapping.

Yet cu daan' nahwtesdle'i 'el.

Then it started to be spring and,

"Sez'ae cu nanghostiidl," dez'ae ihii.

"I should make another potlatch for you," he told his uncle.

Dez'ae cu naghitiitl.

He made a potlatch for his uncle again.

Yi cu xu' dyaak.

Again it happened the same way.

Yihwts'en nse' 'el cu 'ael stana'idyaa decen 'ael 'el.

From then on he went back trapping, with deadfall traps.

Tae' hwnalt'e' ts'en' its'en' hwnalt'e' ts'en' gaa banitdaexe.

Many many things (animals) were coming to him there.

Dez'ae, "Cu nanghostiidl."

He told his uncle, "I am making a potlatch for you again."

Cu dez'ae naghitiitl.

He made a potlatch for his uncle again.

Taade dez'ae ghitiitl.

He made a potlatch for his uncle three times.

Ghadu' dez'ae gha dan'idyaa.

Then he came in to his uncle.

"Sez'ae denc'i denc'i sa ghultsiiden, sghulghal ts'en'.

"My uncle, had you beaten me four times,

du' cu denc'i nantxestiidl," dez'ae 'elnii.

then I would have made a potlatch for you four times," he told his uncle.

Yii c'a cu xugha nen' k'e badahwdezet ts'en'.

This is how the word spread throughout the country about them.

Uts'en ghadu' ghadu' k'ets'idaexden.

We grew up with this.

Nenaan 'el neta' 'el ne'el nakakolniiis xu' kesdult'e'i gha.

Our mother and father told us this so that we could be on our own.

Yii daagga' ghadu' k'ensdzedi 'el hwyaa syitdalnen.
Because of that I grew up and I became aware.

Nanictesdzet.
I started to think for myself.

Ghadu' snakaey 'iinn nanedyaxi 'iinn sts'en dahwduldixi.
The children who are growing up now can learn from me.

Xiigha' nanictudaexi gha.
They can start to think about it.



Blankets hang from poles during Sanford Charley's 1930 potlatch at Batzulnetas. Photo by Robert McKennan.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Batzulnetas Potlatch

Robert McKennan, who was researching the Upper Tanana in 1929-1930, wrote this lively account of Sanford Charley's potlatch at Batzulnetas in the spring of 1930 (1959:136). This is the earliest description of an Athabaskan potlatch in this part of Alaska.

Sanford Charley's potlatch...at Batzulnetas affords a good illustration of the institution . . . Charley's rival, Mentasta Sam, had just given a potlatch, and therefore Charley felt that he must also give one in order to maintain his position . . . His cabin had been enlarged and a long fence erected, from which hung the 165 blankets which were to be distributed [see photo] . . . the Tetling and Lower Nabesna Indians . . . were greeted by a volley of rifle shots. They stopped at a distance of about one hundred yards and donned their finest clothing, heavily beaded . . . Some fifty yards of new calico was run out as a path for their approach . . . In front of Charley's cabin a line of women with hands extended were chanting a song of welcome. Suddenly, in rushed the newcomers. There was much shoving and laughing and the potlatch was on . . . The men took their places along the three sides of the room, a fresh bolt of calico being spread on the floor as a tablecloth. The local women served the repast, which consisted of boiled strips of fat sheep meat, slightly tainted . . . From then on feasting alternated with dancing, both night and day. This particular celebration lasted only two days . . . Before the distribution of the blankets the visiting Indians put on a special dance to the accompaniment of the song composed for the occasion. This was followed by long speeches on the part of the older men. After profusely thanking his guests for their presence, Sanford Charley then distributed the blankets . . . Older visitors, such as Chief Luke of Last Tetling, Chief Peter of Tetling, and Frank Sam of Lower Nabesna [Northway], received as many as fourteen blankets apiece together with a rifle. Younger Indians received as few as two . . . The affair was now officially over.

Strong (1972: chap. 6, pp. 39-40) said this about Sanford Charley's potlatch career:

During the 1920's and 1930's Charley Sanford gave numerous potlatches. He gave 15 potlatches in 15 years. In 1923 he gave a potlatch of over 100 blankets, Hudson Bay blankets, and another kind of blanket which was black and fuzzy and which cost \$14 apiece. He gave the biggest potlatch in the Upper Copper River in 1925, 1926, and 1927. In these three years he gave three potlatches in a row giving away goods worth \$10,000.



Jessie Henry with her children, John Henry and Gene Henry, at Batzulnetas, 1919. Photo by A.M. Bailey, courtesy of Bell Joe.

Detlaen 'linn Ghaye 'Utnii Ts'en' Regarding One's Friends

Fred John

The Ahtna, like most other Northern Athabaskans, have a matrilineal clan system, a kin-grouping that is inherited through the mother. De Laguna describes the Ahtna system as consisting of ten or eleven clans divided into two moieties (groupings of several clans), one which calls the Raven (Saghani) its grandfather, and one which calls the Gull (Nalbaey) its grandfather. De Laguna says (1975:89-90), "Moieties function primarily in dividing individuals into 'opposites' who intermarry, help each other at life crises, particularly at death, and who entertain each other at potlatches."

In the clan system, one's cousins on the mother's side are 'brother' and 'sister', and one can marry one's cross-cousin on the father's side. Thus partners, savethcats, and joking relatives are on the father's side. Lists of the Ahtna clan names and kinship terms are in Buck and Kari 1975:46-54, de Laguna 1975, and de Laguna and McClellan 1981:654-55.

Fred John's brief parable here is about proper behavior between a person, his -cele (younger brother of the same clan), and his -tlaen (partner or friend, i.e. a non-relative of one of the opposite clans). This story is typical of the pointed advice that Chief Fred John gives to his family and visitors.

Nexon koht'aenn 'iinn ts'ilaen ts'en' xona 'engii 'ene' dae' nilts'edatniil ts'en' su.
We are Athabaskans and we tell each other what is forbidden or (what is) wrong.

Ntlaen nasogh yae' taaltael de',
If your partner (a non-relative) is caught out there in the current,

ncele c'a dansogh yae' taaltael de',
and your younger brother is also caught out in the current,

ncele decen le' dutsaes son'o.
you should not hand a stick to your brother (first).

'Axaan.
That's right.

Ntlaen yen le' decen dutsaes daxaan ncele son'o decen dutsaes 'elnii.
You should hand a stick to your partner but you should not hand a stick to your brother.

Ntlaen 'unsogh ta gaa dae' ts'en tayaltael, yen 'a decen dutsaes.
If the current carries your partner over to this side, hand him a stick.

Dae' cu du' neta' 'iinn 'edine'.
This is what our fathers used to say.

Udaagga' ts'exuya'a.
From this (advice) we should be smart.

Yii c'a cu neta' 'inn xu' ne'edini'.
This is what our fathers used to tell us.

K'adii du' naxu ni'el k'a ghatniic.
Now they all know one another.

Ne'el ts'iidaegge 'inn nittlaen 'inn ni'el ta c'eketnaann right now.
Both brothers and friends (relatives and non-relatives) are drinking together right now.

Nexon k'alii xu' tkut'iil.
We did not used to do that.

Netlaen 'inn 'el yaen' sc'atnaan'.
We used to drink only with our friends (non-relatives).

Yii c'a nexon nekuya'a dadule' gha nenaan 'inn de'el 'adii,
So that we might become smart, our mothers would say,

"Ntlaen 'inn yen 'inn, sii tggedze' ghuten'de.
"Your friends, you should hold them up high.

N'el ts'inidaegge 'inn 'ene'."
Leave your own brothers and sisters alone."

Dae' snaan sdine'.
This is what my mother told me.

'Adii dzaenn hwngal'aen' k'al'a snaan dine' laan.
Today I have seen that what my mother said is true.

Cet'aenn Na'aen'de When the Tailed Ones Were Seen

Fred and Katie John

Some of the most compelling stories from the upper Copper River and upper Tanana River area are about the Cet'aenn, 'The Tailed Ones', ape-like creatures with long tails. These stories seem to occur in three domains.

First, Cet'aenn are included in the traditional myth cycle of both Upper Tanana and Upper Ahtna. Robert McKennan, who did anthropological fieldwork in the Upper Tanana area in 1929, recorded a story "Tsa-o-sha Kills Teet'in, the Tailed Man," told in English by Nabesna John and his wife Lucy (McKennan 1959:177-78). Katie John tells a similar story in the Upper Ahtna Yaa Baaghe Tezyaann story cycle.

Second, there are prehistoric stories of the Cet'aenn being killed in their dens by Indians. Batzuhneta, in the story presented here by Fred and Katie John, is famous in the region for its association with the Cet'aenn. McKennan (1959:215) presents an account by Fred Sam, of Cet'aenn being killed in dens two miles below the village of Teet'in.

Third, the Cet'aenn stories are part of the modern folklore of this area. I have heard it said that the Cet'aenn, locally referred to as the "monkey people," come out at night, sit on the mountainsides, and watch over the lowlands. Recently in Mentasta, when a young woman brought home her newborn son, who had an abundance of hair, the baby was jokingly said to be a descendant of a Cet'aenn.

In 1936 archaeologist Froelich G. Ramey surveyed sites on the upper Copper River for archaeological remains. The following statements are from his report (Ramey 1939:359-61).

The road builders who have recently completed the highway from Gulkana to Nabesna found house sites and crude stone tools near Indian River, and a supposed village site, the mythical home of the Teet-tin, the aborigines of the Indian legends, has been described as in the vicinity of Batzuhneta . . . Batzuhneta, a camp of some ten to fifteen natives, situated seventy miles above Gakona, near the headwaters of the Copper, is very probably the settlement visited by Allen in 1885 where he found Chief Batzuhneta, "head man" among the Tatlatans of the upper river. Through Batzuhneta Charlie, we located the site marking the home of the mythical Teet-tin, of whom we had heard from both natives and whites, less than a mile from the present village, on a low bench above an old stream bed which is now dry.

Ramey did some test-digging in some of the thirty pits in this area. He found charcoal, but no man-made artifacts and no evidence of the Cet'aenn dens. Gene Henry, Katie John, and others remember the Ramey survey. No other archaeological work has taken place in the Batzuhneta area.

The following story is probably one of the oldest of the Upper Ahtna historical stories. It is the only story in this collection in which the Upper Ahtna do not yet occupy all of their modern territory (see also Workman 1977:37). The story states that the Upper Ahtna moved onto their lands from the central Copper River area.

Fred John (FJ):

Cet'aenn udetniinn gha kona natsiit sii nahwgholnigi.
Let me tell about the ones called Cet'aenn ('The Tailed Ones').

'Utsiit Sif'aa Caegge yet tah koht'aenn hdelts'ii.
By the water at 'Mouth of Rear River' (Slana), there Ahtnas were staying.

Ciis 'el yet luk ae gha hdelts'ii.
They stayed there dipnetting for salmon.

Yet kaek'ae kulaen.
There was a village there.

Nataelde cu 'el ts'akatniigi.
They did not then know of 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulnetas).

Yet ts'e'a xu ciil, ciil.
There was a young man, a young man.

K'adii ciil sta'iltlet ts'en' u'el kustnak xu.
Now this young man had gone off and he disappeared.

"Xunae' lutzosya'a," dae' dine' ts'en'.
"I am going to go upriver," he said.

Xu' tezyaa ts'en' dae' kii'el denes, ciil de.
They knew that he had gone that way, that young man.

'Uniit Nataelde ldu' Cet'aenn nininaade ligu'.
Upriver the Cet'aenn had moved to 'Roasted Salmon Place'.

Yet ik'e iniyaa.
There he came upon one.

Cet'aenn izelghaen.
A Cet'aenn killed him.

Xiik'et ninitaan ts'en' xii'ukantezyaa.
They (the Ahtnas) missed him and started to look for him.

"Ciil kuyaann.
"The man is smart.

Nts'e nt'aen da?" kiilnii.
What is he doing?" they said.

Ciil xii'uka niniltaen.
They sent a man after him.

Kiitefa'.
They sent him.

'Unae' c'ena' k'ez nae' ghayaal ts'en' 'unae'e xona Natael Na' k'etezyaayi 'el
He walked upriver alongside the river and he came up to 'Roasted Salmon Creek' (Tanada Creek) and

gaa duu nts'e nahwdeggagt.
here there were signs of some kind of life.

Teni tah kulaen.
There were trails.

Koht'aenn 'iinn teni kulaenn 'el
There were people's trails and

'uyggu hwna'aenn 'el tl'ogh dandez'aa xu tene tah.
he looked down and there were stalks of grass across the trail (as a marker).

ltes'es.
He stepped over it.

Xona 'unset Tes K'et ketda'aalden its'en' ghayaal.
Then he walked ahead toward the place called 'On the Hill' (hill south of Batzubnetas).

Xoxo!
Ah-ha!

Uce' naes kulaenn 'iinn!
There were creatures with long tails!

Cu nanse Tes K'et yet ciil tse' nahdetkat inafaenn 'el!
Out there at 'On the Hill' they were playing catch with that young man's head!

Denae tse' nlaen.
It was a man's head.

Yen 'iinn ldu' kuyaana ts'en' lts'ii c'aayts'en' xugha lughayaal.
He was smart and he walked against the wind toward them.

Yet xona xuts'en' hwnaexdesdaa.
Then he sat there watching.

Nts'e cu caan teztliidi.
Somehow it started sprinkling.

Xoxo, de'en tah kunaketdael.
Oh-ho, they went back into their dens.

Yii cu xutah xutneltaax.
Then he counted them.

Lk'edenc'ii ku'eni kulaen.
They had eight dens.

Xu' yits'en' k'enkuxdettaac.
They disappeared into them.

Yits'en' lts'ii xuts'en' cu nekendests'iyi 'el
Then the wind shifted back towards them and

lts'ii naaxe ghayaal ts'en' xutah c'etsen delnen.
as he walked against the wind, they caught his scent.

Hwt'ae' hwdesdenii.
They became excited.

Cu yehwna stana'iltlet.
Meanwhile, he ran away.

Xona na'ideyaa.
Then he returned home.

"Yetah cu zelghaen k'ent'ae.
"It looks as if he was killed among them (the Cet'aenn).

Yetah gguux itse' 'el delghos," 'elnii.
The monsters were playing with his head," he said.

Yihts'en xona deyeeni 'iinn c'ile'.
Then there were medicine people.

"Nts'e tkot'aen?" dae' ku'elnii.
"What can be done?" he said to them.

"Lcaan lcaan de'eni kunkedel.
"When it rains they go into their dens.

'Adii yaltii dze'a de'eni kunacekuhwdilnen.
As the rain approached, they all rushed into their dens in a group.

Tes K'et c'a kol xu kuz'aan," dae' ku'elnii.
Then there was no one at "On the Hill," he told them.

Yihwts'en xona deyeeni 'iinn su caan du' 'uka nihtezdaek.
Then the medicine people directed their thoughts toward rain.

'Unii ka'aat nihnidaetl.
They went upriver and off a distance (from 'On the Hill').

Kadel ts'en' lacdzaas lecenkezdlaa ts'en'.
As they walked, they gathered together "brushy spruce" (parasitic growth in spruce).

Yii tah decen ciit kenketl'uun.
They tied that onto the ends of poles.

Yet xona kuigha'aat ninidaetl.
Then they stopped off at a distance from them (the Cet'aenn).

Xona caan de caan xu'el nihdusiidi ghat deye'ni 'iinn.
Then came the rain that those medicine people had tried to make.

Caan xu'el nihdiniiset ts'en'.
They had caused it to rain on them.

Xona nelt'e' ts'en' de'ene kunkatdaetlde.
Then many of them went back into their dens.

Yii lacdzaas 'enkon'hdezyel ts'en' xona xu'eni xu'eni tah.
Then they (the Ahlnas) set those "brushy spruce" on fire around their dens.

Yii lacdzaas dezkan' ts'en'.
Those "brushy spruce" burned.

Kukon'xdildaetl ts'en'.
They threw the fire inside.

Yii su xona bests'ae yii su Cet'aenn k'aa' udatne'.
That stone (bests'ae) was then called 'Cet'aenn's arrowhead'.¹

Gha yii su dayygu nin' nu' lcaan k'enihwdelnén.
Those (stones) exploded like rain from holes in the ground.

Xuc'aa tah hdelts'ii ts'en'.
They (the Ahlnas) sat away from them.

K'alii kughaagh dit'ehe.
They were not close to them.

Xona kon' kaen' kuxghighaan ts'en'.
Thus they killed them with fire.

Xona 'utsen c'ena' tsihdidaetl.
Then they went down to the river.

Luk'ae cu dayygu.
Salmon were down there.

Ti!
 Ti!

Gaa duu lu luk'ae kulaen xu.
Here there were salmon.

'Udooxu yae' ciisi ghayaen' ts'edelts'ii.
At that time they were dipping only downriver (at 'Slana).

Yii su xona tseh kaek'ae kuzdlaende, Cet'aenn gha' kehhdil'aande su.
This is how that first became a village, because they had discovered the Cet'aenn.

¹ The stone called bests'ae, possibly obsidian, that exploded from the dens, came to be known as 'Cet'aenn's arrowhead.

Natael'de kaek'ae kughile'de.
'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulnetas) was then a village.

Yet cu ndeden c'a kughile'?
Now when was that?

Yii c'a 100 years kughile'.
Maybe 100 years ago.

Dan'a tah su konii le'.
Probably longer than that.

Gha yii gaa Cet'aenn, Cet'aenn laaxe 'iinn ne'el nakalniis su tdesniide.
Those Cet'aenn, I am telling how the ancestors used to tell us about those Cet'aenn.

Katie John (KJ):

Gha yihwts'en k'alii Cet'aenn nahnil'üle.
From then on they never saw the Cet'aenn again.

Ghayii Cet'aenn kiinüi ts'en' dae' koht'aenn k'ehdit'e' xu.
They say that the Cet'aenn looked like a human.

K'a ugha' ugha' 'el kughile' ts'en'.
It had body hair.

Unaen' k'et du' k'alii ugha' kulehe ts'en'.
There was no hair on its face.

Koht'aenn k'e unaen' dit'e' kiinüi.
They say its face was like a man's.

Ula' tah yii c'a koht'aenn cu koht'aenn k'ehdit'e' ts'en'.
Its hands were like a man's hands.

Uce' naesi kughile'.
It had a long tail.

Koht'aenn ce'e 'iinn k'e 'enlcaax kiidine'.
They say that it was as big as a tall person.

Dae' sii badahwde'estnes.
That is what I heard about it.

Naxu sos 'eni k'e de'eni tah xehwghighaan.
They made their dens like bear dens.

'Uygu nin' 'aax tah hdaghalts'e'.
They stayed down below the ground.

Snaan sc'aen ghile'de tseh xu ts'eghiyaade gha yet koht'aenn hdaghalts'e' 'iinn,
When my mother was a child, and first went there where the people used to stay (Batzulnetas).

yen 'iinn nekiininiyaa.
they led her around it (the den area).

Yen 'iinn gha' Cet'aenn 'eni hwni'faen'.
Because of them she saw the Cet'aenns' dens.

Dats'ii k'alii ldanahwnelyaeghe.
It still was not overgrown with brush.

Dats'ii kankusdaann 'el snaan snaan hwni'faen'.
It was still a cave when my mother saw it.



Residents of Old Mentasta, 1949. Left to right: Agnes Nickolai holding Dorothy John and Rosie Nickolai, Nancy John (child), Ruth John, Smitty Gene, Ben John, Nelson John, Fred John, Sr., Fred John, Jr. The dog is Spider. Photo courtesy of Molly Galbreath.

K'ekotcenn' Kaghaltsiin Tinn The People Who Came Out of 'On the Flat' (Midway Lake)

Katie John

The 'Alts'en' Tnaey are a Tanana River clan.¹ They were formerly found on the lower Tanana River, but are now only in the Tanacross, Upper Tanana, and Upper Ahtna language areas. Most of the specialists in warfare in this region were 'Alts'en' Tnaey. Several stories in this collection involve 'Alts'en' Tnaey war leaders (see chiefs' clans, chap. 3, and chaps. 8, 9, 10, and 11).

De Laguna (1975:97) says of the 'Alts'en' Tnaey, "They always win the war, and boast that they are so feared that their enemies never seek revenge. Nor do they have to pay blood money. They themselves feel that they are the warrior protectors of the Atna, especially against Chugach raids."

The 'Alts'en' Tnaey are unique in the region in that they allow marriage within the clan. Katie John, who herself is 'Alts'en' Tnaey on both her father's and mother's sides, here tells the story of the first meeting and mating of the two divisions of the clan at K'ekotcenn' Menn', Midway Lake, north of Tetlin. She also tells of subsequent skirmishes with Tanana River Athabaskans who were opposed to 'Alts'en' Tnaey marriage rules, and of the formation of the Raven moiety alliance with several Copper River Ahtna clans.

'Alts'en' Tnaey 'iinn udatne'e 'iinn,
The people called the 'Alts'en' Tnaey (One-Way) people,

sii stseh tnaey 'iinn gaa 'Alts'en' Tnaey datne'e'.
the people that are ahead of me (my clan ancestors), here they are called 'Alts'en' Tnaey.

'Alts'en' Tnaey 'iinn c'eldaan' 'iinn dadaadze Tutl'aa hwts'en kiltsiin xu'ekenii.
Some of the 'Alts'en' Tnaey, they tell them that they were formed downriver (down the Tanana) at 'Headwaters' (Toklat).²

Tsuugi tsuugi 'eni ts'en ts'ekiltsiinn ts'en' tsuugi ce' xu'enaghaltl'u' xu'edatne'.
They emerged from a marten's den and they were told that they had marten tails tied onto them.³

K'adii sii sta' ghile' 'Alts'en' Tnaey yen c'a.
Now my father, he too was of the 'Alts'en' Tnaey clan.

¹ I translate 'Alts'en' Tnaey here as 'One-Way' people. The term has also been translated as 'Single-Minded' people and 'Fierce' people.

² De Laguna (1975:109) reports from Tanacross that this downriver branch of the 'Alts'en' Tnaey is said to be from the confluence of the Toklat-Kantishna River with the Tanana.

³ Thus the marten tail became their crest symbol.

Da'aat K'ekotcenn' gha yetah kakaltsiin xu'edatne'.
They came out from over at 'On the Flat' (Midway Lake, north of Tetlin) they were told.

'Udooxo hwt's'en ta 'Alts'en' Tnaey 'udaadze kakezdaetl.
Some (other) 'Alts'en' Tnaey came up from downriver.

Na'aa yet c'a K'ekotcenn' gha xuk'ekidaetl.
They came upon people at 'On the Flat'.

Xu'ekewdilaan.
They discovered them (there).

Nansogh tanuu k'et tah koht'aenn kilaen xu.
Out in the middle on islands there were people.

Tanuu k'e tahdelts'ii.
They were staying on islands.

Yet xughanggu ts'ekkezdaetl 'el
They (the downriver people) came out upland from them and

koht'aenn 'inn xuyuu' tah xunidilaa ts'en' 'egedah 'aede nahtedel.
the people (on the island) took off their clothes and they went naked.

Xugha nihniidaetl ts'en', "Ne'ekdaan' ne'ekdaan' 'ule'e," dae' xu'ekenni.
They (the downriver people) stopped by them, and "You should become our clanspeople," they said to them.

Naxu natl'edzi yii xuzizagha nihnimilaa
Then they (the downriver people) put those beads around their necks.

Kaydu naxu tuu yit tuu naegge' uts'enu.
They (the people from the lake) call it "water eye", (a plant) there in the water.⁴

xuytah utanancnestcezi k'ent'aey.
it was all around them like lines tied together.

Yet yu ta zizagha hnelyaa.
They (the people from the lake) had it tied around their necks.

Yu dilna ts'en' yii xuzizagha nihnimilaa ts'en' nil'el koht'aenn kesdlaet.
In return they (the downriver people) put this "water eye" plant around their necks and they became a united people.⁵

Yik'ets'en xona dadaa' tuu yii tabaagga daa' ta ninaelnidaetl ts'en'
Afterwards they (the people from the lake) moved downriver along the shore of the (Tanana) river and

⁴ This water plant has been identified as bladderwort, *Utricularia* sp. (P. R. Kart, personal communication).

⁵ Gaddon, writing about the 'Alts'en' Tnaey in Tetlin (1974:71), notes versions of this story in which a baby is found inside the plant's leaves or that the leaves are transformed into people.

xuhtah xona xu hdelts'i'iy 'el ts'ilghan ciil K'ekotcenn' kaghaltsiinn.
they lived among them (the downriver people) and there was one young man who had come from 'On the Flat'.

Yen yaen' dadaadze 'iltsiinn ts'akae yen 'el nateltaes.
Only he was going around with a woman who was from downriver.

Xuk'ekilniic.
They (other downriver people) found out about them.

Yedan'a du' koht'aenn 'iinn nif'adelkani 'iinn k'alii nif'el lu'idaedl.
Previously, the people could not mate with their own maternal relatives.

Yii c'a 'ene' kiighil'aen' ts'en' yen xuk'ekilniigi 'el
Thus they considered to be forbidden and they found out about them and

gha yen ciil, ciil tahghilt'ak.
that young man, they threw that man into the water.

Kizelghaen ts'en' takiing'iin.
They killed him and hid his body in the water.

Yik'ets'en' 'el ta xona kaghadi 'iinn xuk'ekilniic ts'en'
After that time, then they found out about other people (who had intermarried) and

zelghaen ts'en' xuk'ekilniic.
they killed them if they found out about them.

Yet den xona nile'aa ninkitdaetl xu' tkedyaak.
At that time, then they (the two groups) separated from one another.

Dae' xu'ekenii.
This is what they were told.

Yihwk'e yaen' badahwde'estnes.
This is all that I have heard about it.

Sden xona c'eghaan t'ehghil'aen'i gha xugha nahwgholnigi.
Now I will tell about another war that they had.

'Alts'en' Inaey 'iinn 'udaa', 'Alts'en' Inaey kaskae' Tsighaala' Ta' bedi'a'.
Downriver (the Tanana River) the 'Alts'en' Inaey people, there was an 'Alts'en' Inaey chief named Tsighaala' Ta' ('Father of Hair Hand').

'Udaa' C'ecael'yu udatne'e' 'iinn,
From the people downriver called the C'ecael'yu (Salmon Tail) clan,

C'ecael'yu gha yen 'Alts'en' Inaey ts'akae 'uzniic.
a C'ecael'yu clan (man) married an 'Alts'en' Inaey clan woman.

Yen Tsighaala' Ta' telts'e' nlaen.
She was the sister of Tsighaala' Ta'.

Udooxo nin'ta nahtedel.

They went out into the country downriver (in the lower Tanana area).

Yen nts'e kedyaaggi gha.

Something happened to them.

Nilts'en' kehwdel'aan.

Some trouble occurred between them.

Yii tseh tah nts'e kedyaaggi gha nilts'en' kehwdel'aan xu'ekenii.

They say that some time previously some trouble occurred between them.

Yii c'a xuh nahtedefi 'el gha yen 'Alts'en' Tnaey 'el kot'aenn

They were going around and that man who was married to the 'Alts'en' Tnaey clan (woman)

C'ecael'yu beldaan'e 'iinn c'a kilaen.

had relatives of the C'ecael'yu clan.

Yen 'iinn dae', "Xona 'Alts'en' Tnaey 'iinn xutl'asku'aah.

They said, "We should wipe out the 'Alts'en' Tnaey people.

Xuts'ughaan'a," xu'ekenii ts'en'.

We should kill them," they told them.

'Udaa'a niltanahwnichdet'aas.

They discussed the news together downriver.

Yii c'a xona c'eghaan gha nikhwnilaa ts'en' 'udaadze xutl'ahtezdaetl.

Then they got ready for war and they followed them (the couple) downriver.

C'ecael'yu 'Alts'en' Tnaey 'el kot'aenn du' Tsighaala' Ta' utlen nlaen.

That C'ecael'yu man married to the 'Alts'en' Tnaey woman was Tsighaala' Ta's brother-in-law.

Utelts'e' yen 'el kot'aen.

He was married to his sister.

Yii c'a nahtesdaedl 'el xona 'udaadze 'udaadze nakadel ts'en'.

They started back and then from downriver, as they came back from downriver,

xukeghaan xukeghaan nihnedel ts'en'.

they were killing them (some other 'Alts'en' Tnaey people) as they camped overnight.

Yen xona C'ecael'yu xona tl'akezdaetl; xu'eldaan'e.

Then they caught up with that C'ecael'yu man; (he was) their own relative.

U'aat u'aat caan tnae.

His wife was pregnant.

De'aat de'aat ghaynitsin' ts'en', "Ene', s'aat son'o zulghael!" xu'elnii.

He was possessive of his wife and, "No, don't kill my wife!" he told them.

"Nek'edze' xuts'enakaey ninahwtalaeh.
"Later on their children will be born.

Yen 'iinn nahwtanlyaexi.
They will grow up.

K'enanehtalniil su tkut'ae.
They will take revenge against us.

Yii gha ts'ezulghaehi," kenii.
Therefore, we should kill them both," they said.

Deghol' ghatgge xuc'a' yildaa ts'en'.
He kept her from them between his legs.

Daxu'udetkan.
He made a proposal to them.

"Ene', s'aa ghayne'estsin' xa'," xu'elnii.
"No, I am possessive of my wife," he told them.

"Nuh'e kooskaedi," nii.
"I'll pay you off," he said.

Yii c'a yidi'i 'adatne' ts'en' naenn du' k'adii u'el ts'ats'atnigi.
Then something was said that we today do not understand.

"Nin' c'itsiy," udetnii.
"Land iron," it is called."

Nin' c'itsiy yii de'aat k'enaghitaan.
He traded his wife for land iron.

Dae' udatne'.
So it is said.

Yii c'a gaa duu C'ecael'yu 'Alts'en' Inaey 'iinn t'ae' neyits'ae neyits'ae hdicaax.
With that, the C'ecael'yu clan became of higher status than us of the 'Alts'en' Inaey clan.

K'e xugha nihdefaa nin' c'itsiy kaen' 'Alts'en' Inaey nakughikaedi gha.
They gained higher status because the 'Alts'en' Inaey clan paid them with land iron.

Yii gha k'adii c'a xugha nahkolniis.
Now this is what they say about them.

Yen 'iinn gaa duu 'Alts'en' Inaey 'iinn udaagga' delts'u 'iinn udetnii.
It is said that the 'Alts'en' Inaey clan is (still) living because of this.

Yihwts'en k'ali t'aa zilghael ts'en' utlen du' utseh 'unse nayadaal.
After that they did not kill his wife, and his brother-in-law was going back ahead of him.

* Katie John does not know what the term 'land iron' referred to.

Yen c'a kudeldiyede 'a nanedaal xuk'a.
He kept camping a short distance away.

Tsighaala' Ta' c'edan'a denenn' kanasdyaa su tkut'ae.
Previously, Tsighaala' Ta' had gone back up to his own country (in the Upper Tanana area).

"Gaa hwts'en xannohdael," xu'elnii ts'en'.
"You should turn back away from this place," he had told them.

Yii k'e kedyaa ts'en' kanahnidaetl.
It happened then that they turned back.

Tsighaala' Ta' k'alii tl'akidaetl.
They did not catch up with Tsighaala' Ta'.

Yetah Tsighaala' Ta' xutah detlen k'e xantaey' tezyaa.
Then Tsighaala' Ta' hurried after his brother-in-law.

"Xantaey' nnenn' kanzidaas!
"Hurry back up to your country!

'Udaadze nk'e neldaan'a 'iinn nk'ehnadeli 'iinn."
Your relatives are coming after you from downriver."

Tsilahkuz'aande su tkut'ae.
They had killed them (some downriver 'Alts'en' Tnaey).

"'Adii xantaey' nnenn' kanzidaas!" yilnii ts'en' xu' dyaak.
"Hurry and go back to your country now!" he said to him, and so it happened.

Denenn' kanakesdaetl ts'en' Tsighaala' Ta' xona uyihwghizet ts'en'
They went back up to their own country and Tsighaala' Ta' became angry and

nen'k'e natedaas ts'en' nayiis 'iinn ta 'ukaet.
he went into the country to hire some warriors.

Koht'aenn 'iinn ta 'ukaet nayiis gha.
He hired people for war.

Xona nayiis 'iinn nilyighilaa ts'en' xona gaa c'eghaan tse' nlaen 'iinn.
Then he gathered together the warriors, and then here were the war chiefs.

Nayiis tse' ghile' 'iinn nadaegge 'iinn kilaen.
There were two war chiefs.

Yen 'iinn xona c'eyits'ae nse' nt'aenn 'iinn.
They were people of superior skill.

Yen 'iinn xona xu'ughikaet.
Then he hired them.

Xu'utezkaedi xuts'en' ts'ehwdetnigi.
As he was about to pay them they refused him.

"K'alii n'el c'eghaan stal'iile.
"We are not going to make war with you.

Ntse'e 'iinn ntse'e 'iinn nele' ghilaa de', yede yaen' nts'en' kestadel," kiilnii.
If you give us your daughters, only then will we join you," they told him.

Yihwts'en xu' xunlaak.
Then he did that for them.

Detse'e 'iinn xu'el nimilaa.
His daughters went with them.

Yii 'el ta xona xugha nayiis tse' ghile'.
That is how they became war chiefs for them.

Yet 'udaa' xuk'enatesdyiits.
They went back downriver on the warpath after them.

'Udaa' xu'uka htezdaetl.
They started downriver after them.

Nduu xu nduude Yukon Na' tsen le'e c'a tanahtedel.
They may have gone somewhere towards the Yukon River.

Xutl'akezdaetl ts'en' xu'ekehwdifaa.
They overtook them (C'ecael'yu clan) and they found them.

Xukeghaan, xukeghaan.
They killed them, they killed them.

Yet k'enaxukelyaak ts'e xuhghighaan.
Taking revenge on them there, they killed them.

Xutl'akehwghi'aan.
They ('Alts'en' Tnaey) killed them all.

Cu 'Alts'en' Tnaey 'iinn gha nahwgholnigi xugha hwnic dahwdighile'i k'e.
I will tell more about the 'Alts'en' Tnaey people as there is information about them.

Dits'iiltsiinn 'el nil'aay kaltsiinn xu'ehdine' xugha 'el dade'estnes.
I know about how they say that they joined with the Dits'iiltsiinn, 'From the Canyon People'.

Yii gha xugha nahwgholnic.
I tell about this.

Tat'ahwt'aenn 'iinn 'Alts'en' Tnaey 'iinn c'ekudaghalne' ts'en'.
The Tat'ahwt'aenn 'Headwaters People' of the 'Alts'en' Tnaey clan were fierce.

Ts'anikelt'e'i t'ehghit'e' ts'en'.
They were really mean.

Yii gha 'udaa' xu'enaydelyaann 'iinn ts'en' 'udaa' 'Atna' daa' hdelts'ii.
Downriver they had some maternal relatives who stayed down on 'Atna' (Copper River).

Naltsiinn 'el ta Dits'iiltsiinn 'el ta yen 'iinn xa'xu kudelkani 'iinn.
The Naltsiin 'Sky People' and the Dits'iiltsiin 'From the Canyon People', were slightly related to (the 'Alts'en Tnaey).

"Yii c'a Dits'iiltsiinn 'iinn ne'eldaan' 'iinn ghule'e.
"Those Dits'iiltsiinn should become our people."

Nek'e c'ekudelnii," xu'ekenii ts'en'.
They are fierce like us," they ('Alts'en' Tnaey) said.

Yii gha 'udaa' xona k'ehztezdaetl.
For that reason then they ('Alts'en' Tnaey) started downriver.

'Atna' daa' 'udaa' detse nidac'ehdelyaa.
They sent word ahead down the Copper River.

"'Udaa' k'estadel xa'.
"We will come downriver."

Naltsiinn 'iinn dets'enekaey 'iinn ta c'olt'aax staxukulael de'.
The Naltsiinn should hide their children under the partitions.

C'aadze 'iinn yen 'iinn xu nts'e xu' xuduhne'ida.
Don't tell the opposite (clan) people that.

Xuts'enekaey 'iinn 'el xuhk'a kuhnu'aaen'e.
Let their children see them (the 'Alts'en Tnaey)."

'Udaa' Dits'iiltsiinn 'iinn net'aay tikudael de'.
The Dits'iiltsiinn people should meet us downriver."

'Udaa' nidac'ehwdinilaa.
So word was sent downriver.

'Alts'en' Tnaey 'iinn ts'en' xona 'udaa' htezdaetl.
The 'Alts'en' Tnaey people then started downriver.

Sos tse' tsic'uus ta utse' uciit ucidezdaay.
They were wearing bear skull hats on their heads.

⁷ The opposite people are the Seagull moiety, which consists of five or six clans including Tsisyu, Udzisyu, C'ecaelyu. These opposite people might be potential partners through marriage, so their children are allowed to witness the meeting. Meanwhile, the children of the Dits'iiltsiin, who are of the same moiety, are told to hide in the areas under the bunks in the old-style Altna house.

Sos tse' tsic'uus kiighighaan.
They had made bear skull hats.

Xuytah nihdelyaa 'udaa' k'ehghidaetl.
They wore them as they came among them downriver.

Sos kilaen k'ehdelyaa.
They were dressed like bears.

Yu' nihdelyaa xu' sos kilaen ts'en' k'ekit'ae ts'en' xunigetkusen.
They wore clothing like bears and they made themselves scary looking.⁸

Xu' 'udaa' k'ehghidaetl.
They came downriver like this.

'Udaa' xona Dits'iiltsiinn 'iinn hdelts'ude
Downriver where the Dits'iiltsiinn people stayed

yen 'iinn xut'aay tinidaetl 'udaa' Nic'akuni'aade.
they came out to meet them down at 'Where Land Extends in Both Directions'.⁹

Tsidatl'uunn yii nihdelyaa.
They (Dits'iiltsiinn) were wearing woven hats.¹⁰

Xut'aay tihnidatetl.
They came out to meet them.

Xona sos xutanil'aats 'ekudyaak.
They (the 'Alts'en Tnaey) moved among them like a herd of bears.

Yii snakaey 'iinn xunilget ts'en'.
Those children were afraid of them.

Naltsiinn 'iinn du' xuts'enekaey stanxuhnel'ün xuhnal'iil c'a'
Those Naltsiinn had hidden their children so they wouldn't see them

snakaey nitalgedi c'a'.
and so the children would not get scared.

"Snakaey yits'edadel," dae' xu'ekenii ts'en'.
"The children would get hysterical," they (the upriver 'Alts'en Tnaey) had told them.

C'aadze xuts'enekaey 'iinn xuk'a yits'ededaet de' xutah xuk'a xu'ekenii ts'en'
They told them (downriver) that the opposite side's children might get hysterical when among them but

c'aadze yen 'iinn xuk'a kit'ae ts'en'.
that was okay for the opposite side.

⁸ The 'Alts'en' Tnaey, dressed as bears, challenge the Dits'iiltsiinn people to become their allies.

⁹ Fred and Katie John think that this place is in the Gakona area. There are two other places on the Copper River with the same name, one near Chistochina and one near Wood Camp below Copper Center.

¹⁰ This seems to be a Tlingit-style hat, with a visor woven out of spruce roots. The Dits'iiltsiinn are closely associated with the Yakutat Tlingit.

Xuta cehwdelnen.

They ('Alts'en Tnaey) marched among them.

Dits'iltsiinn xuf'aay cehwdilnen.

The Dits'iltsiinn people marched out to meet them.

Yen 'inn xona xuk'eh li'i niyilgedi 'inn, xuk'eh c'eyudaghahne'e 'inn.

They were not afraid of them, they were fierce like them.

Yii xona nilla' kutestniicde yet xona nilt'aa kadaef.

Then they shook hands and met there.

Sos tsic'uus ta xunihdila.

They gave them the bear hats.

Dits'iltsiinn 'inn du' tsidatl'uunn yii dilnats'en' xunihdila.

The Dits'iltsiinn people gave the woven hats in return.

Yet xona yet nilla' kustniic ts'en' Dits'iltsiinn 'el.

Then they shook hands there with the Dits'iltsiinn people.

'Alts'en' Tnaey ts'ilghan kezdaende kedyaa.

They became united with the 'Alts'en' Tnaey people.

Nik'akaltsiil xuk'a 'Alts'en' Tnaey 'el Dits'iltsiinn 'el ts'elk'ey kezdaen.

They had been formed separately but the 'Alts'en' Tnaey people and the Dits'iltsiinn people became united.

Xuk'a Dits'iltsiinn kaltsiil ts'en' Dits'iltsiinn xu'edi'a.

Then the Dits'iltsiinn people were named 'From the Canyon People'.¹¹

'Alts'en' Tnaey xu'edi'a.

The 'Alts'en' Tnaey people were named.

yii c'a Naltsiinn 'el Dits'iltsiinn 'el 'Alts'en' Tnaey 'el nilghakaltsiil dit'ae ts'en'.

and so the Naltsiinn, the Dits'iltsiinn, and the 'Alts'en' Tnaey people were joined together (into the Raven moiety).

Dits'iltsiinn, 'Alts'en' Tnaey ts'elk'ey tkit'ae.

The Dits'iltsiinn people and the 'Alts'en' Tnaey people are one.

Naltsiinn 'inn du' yen 'inn cu xu'eldaan' 'inn kilaen.

The Naltsiinn, they too are their clansmen.

Xuk'a xa'xu xuc'aay yaltsiil.

They are just a little different from them.¹²

Ghat yet dae' xu' xona nahwnicdahwdighile'.

Thus, then, is the information that there is.

¹¹ They are so named because they are said to have entered Copper River from the coast through Wood Canyon.

¹² In another clan history story, Fred John tells how an 'Alts'en' Tnaey chief from Toklat and a Naltsiinn chief from the lower Copper River had a fight after disagreeing about an exchange of trade goods at Tyone Lake. Fred states that this caused some tension between the two clans.

Yet c'a 'Alts'en' Tnaey 'iinn xa'xu tl'akat'aan keniide.

They say that the (original) 'Alts'en' Tnaey clan was almost exterminated.

Yihwts'en li'i su' nahnidyaha ts'en' k'alii su' 'Alts'en' Tnaey kulehe.

Afterwards they did not increase much and there are not many 'Alts'en' Tnaey people (today).

K'adii na'oox Hwdisaade yaen' 'el Tetlin xona,

Now only over at 'Distant Place' (Mansfield or Tanacross) and Tetlin then,

'Alts'en' Tnaey 'iinn yaen' hdelts'ii.

only there do 'Alts'en' Tnaey people live.

Dadaa' 'Atna' c'a kol.

Down 'Atna' (Copper River) there is no one.

Nadaat Chistochina yaen' nadaegge 'iinn yaen' zdaa.

Down at Chistochina only two of them are staying.

Yen 'iinn yaen' xona kadaa' 'Alts'en' Tnaey kol ts'en'.

Other than those two, there are no 'Alts'en' Tnaey people further downriver.

Da'oox nae' yae' yaen' xu tkut'ae.

They are only over there upriver (on the Tanana side).



Women and children near *Nataelde* (Batzulnetas) with pack-laden dogs, 1937. Left to right: Lula Frank carrying Steven Frank, Jessie Sanford, Oscar Albert, Daisy Nickolai carrying Laura Nickolai. Photo courtesy of Molly Galbreath.

Tsaal K'aas C'eghaan T'il'aen'de
*When 'He Trains the Chinook Wind'
 Made War*

Katie John

This appears to be the easternmost story in the collection of Upper Altna historical stories. It involves a people called the Nah'aay who are said to be from the headwaters of the Yukon River. The Nah'aay are probably the people known as Nahani. Fred and Katie John speculate that they were an Eskimo band from far to the west who moved into the timber on the upper Yukon. The Johns state that these people had round faces and Eskimo features, and they note the reference to the Eskimo blanket toss sport in the story. In this story, however, the Nah'aay speak Athabaskan.

Gillespie (1981:451-453) summarizes the complex references to the people called Nahani, a name used by many Athabaskans for a people considered to be warlike. He speculates that they were a band of the Kaska or Mountain Athabaskans. John Ritter (personal communication) notes that the Kutchin refer to the Mackenzie Mountains, at the divide between the Ross and upper Pelly rivers and the Nahanni River at the Yukon-Northwest Territory border, as Nah'aai Ddhàa 'Nahani mountains'. This is perhaps the location of the last battle in this story. The location of the first episode in the story, when Tsaal K'aas' people are killed, is not certain. Katie John thinks it may have taken place on either the upper Tanana River or the middle Yukon River. She states that the man with the intriguing name, Tsaal K'aas, 'He Trains the Chinook Wind', was a member of the 'Alts'en' Tnaey clan, and that this story took place after the 'Alts'en' Tnaey had allied with the Dits'ilt'sinn clan (chap. 7) but before the war with the Skesne ("Aleuts") in Prince William Sound (chap. 9).

Da'ooxo Dadaa' Tuu' datne' k'e c'eghaan c'eghaan dghat'aen'e gha nahwgholnigi.
*I will tell about the war that happened over there at what is called 'Downriver Water'
 (or Nukah Tu', Yukon River).*

Dena'e kaskae Tsaal K'aas bedi'a'.
There was a chief named Tsaal K'aas, 'He Trains the Chinook Wind'.

Koht'aenn 'iinn kaskae ghile'.
He was the chief of the people.

Yen gha nahwgholnigi.
I will tell about him.

Xuhde tak'ae kulaende hdelts'ii.
They (Tsaal K'aas' band) stayed there in a timbered valley.

Tsaal K'aas idu' stanadaas.
Tsaal K'aas would go out hunting.

Stanatkaes.

He would go hunting in a canoe.

Nduu tuu k'et stanatkaes.

He would go hunting on the river.

Ik'et'laat, Nah'aay udetniinn 'iinn ik'et'laat nidaedl.

From the headwaters, the ones called Nah'aay people came from the (Yukon) headwaters.

Koht'aenn c'aaydze' kadghaan.

They were different in appearance from the (Athabaskan) people.

Xunaen' nelbaadze nt'aenn 'iinn.

They were people with round faces.

Xukaskae' Ne'enggey bedi'a'.

Their chief was called Ne'enggey.

Koht'aenn 'iinn kekehwhi'aan.

They killed some (Tanana or Yukon River) people.

Ts'akaey 'iinn nadaegge 'iinn nahdeldae'k xu'ekenu.

They saw that they took back (abducted) two women.

Xona Tsaal K'aas naghatkaeli 'el c'ezaege' ut'aay taghila.

Then Tsaal K'aas was paddling back and he encountered some corpses floating in the water.

C'ezae' tatelesi k'e naghatkaeli 'el c'ezae' yit tsehde xu' tkeyilaakde.

He paddled to the floating corpses and (realized that) previously they (the Nah'aay) had also done this (killed people).

Yedu' ba u'el sdade'estniigi.

However, I do not know about that (the earlier event).¹

K'adii xu' k'eda xu' nakeyilaak.

Now they had done this again.

Yii nahkolnigi.

They tell about this.

Yii 'el dadestnes.

This is what I heard.

Yet c'ezae' ut'aay talaet.

He encountered corpses floating in the water.

Dazae ts'ilghan dzuuggi yil'aen.

One of them was his nephew who was a dzuuggi.²

¹ Katie John means here that she does not know the full account about this earlier event in which the Nah'aay attacked people on the Tanana River or middle Yukon River.

² A dzuuggi is a favorite child who receives special instruction, particularly in storytelling, from infancy until he or she is a young man or woman. See chapter 15 where Fred John says he was trained as a dzuuggi.

Yii uzaege' ut'aay taghilt'aen.
He met his body floating there.

Yii i'el c'etl'azkaen ts'en' kon' yiltsiin.
He towed him back and cremated him.

"Ye danse Nah'aay udetniinn 'iinn
"Those called Nah'aay

sk'etl'aadze' yedan'a na'idaetl' a nts'e tkot'aen le' dae'.
have come back while I was gone and this has happened.

Ne'enggey dan'a na'idyiits.
Ne'enggey has attacked again.

Yii gha' c'ezae' st'aay talaet," dae' nii.
That is why these bodies are floating here," he said.

Xona dan'a dazae kon' ltsiin.
Then he cremated his nephew.³

Ughak'ae naatkael.
He paddled back to his home.

Xona tak'ae na'itkaenn 'el k'alii cu koht'aenn ts'ilghan k'alii 'itdaha.
He paddled into the valley and not one of the people was there.

Ye c'a xona ba'ooxo koht'aenn 'iinn c'ezaege'
Out there some of the people's

c'eldaan c'ezaege' xuh k'a dats'ii zdlaa ts'en'.
bodies were still there.

Xutah natedaasi 'el bazaey naade 'iinn kol.
He went among them and two of his nieces were missing.

Is'akaey 'iinn yii gha' ba'ooxo nek'ehwdelae ts'en'.
He looked around there for the women.

Kon'ta naghalt'aedze' natedaas.
He went all around the camp.

Ye ts'akaey bazaey 'iinn naade 'iinn kole 'iinn.
Two of his nieces were missing.

Nts'e tkut'ae dae' inizen ts'en'.
He wondered what had happened.

Ba'ooxo kon'k'ae tak'ae kulaen ts'en'.
Away from the campsite was the timbered area.

³ This expression literally means 'he made his nephew into a fire'.

Ba'ooxo tiy 'enzedi natedaas
He kept going farther out,

nduuhwts'en koht'aenn 'iinn kenidaetlde 'uka xu'uka nak'ehwdelaes.
looking for where the people had gone.

Natedaasi 'el ldu' gaa tene kulaende natedaasi 'el
He went back and forth and he started on a trail there and

nduuhwts'en ta xona naxu cots behwdif'aan.
somewhere he found some down (feathers).

Cots ba'ooxo dezdlaay nadetggani 'enyahwdest'iidi 'ehwdif'aan.
He found some dry down that appeared out there.

Yii gha' xona xu' inizen yet ts'akaey 'iinn kole 'iinn.
Because of this he thought that those women who were missing.

yen 'iinn nahdeldaegge 'iinn le'e.
might have been abducted by them (the Nah'aay)

Ugheldze' nek'ehwdelaes ts'en' xuk'e ledezyaa.
He looked around carefully and he followed them part way.

Cots nilk'aek'e cots nedetggann ts'en' beyahwdat'aen xu' dyaak.
On both sides some dry down was visible.

Yii nek'edinilaay gha' xona yii ts'akaey 'iinn yen 'iinn ndahwk'e ninaxuhdimuldaek.
Because he saw these he thought that wherever they had taken those women

k'e su xu' kayakehwdat'ihi inizen ts'en'.
these (feathers) would be noticeable.

Yihts'en xona nilk'ae tanatetkaes.
After that he paddled in both directions.

Koht'aenn 'iinn tah natekaesi nayiis 'iinn ta'ukaet.
He boated among (his) people to hire them as warriors.

U'el koht'aenn 'iinn lecenzdlaa.
He got together with the people.

C'a xona gaa naade 'iinn nayiis tse' ghule'e 'iinn.
Then two of them who were to be war chiefs,

yen 'iinn yen 'iinn 'uka c'a xona natedaas.
he went to get them.

Naade 'iinn nayiis tse' nlaen 'iinn xu'uzniic.
He obtained two war chiefs.

Yen 'iinn cu 'ughikaet.

He hired them.

Ye xona 'alden nixunilats'en' xona ninkidaetl.

He brought them together and they met.

Yihwts'en xuhetkaek.

From there (the site of the killings) they started tracking them (the Nah'aay).

Yen 'iinn naxu ts'akaey 'iinn naxu, cilt'ogho kiilniy yidi'i 'ahdine' le'

Those women, into something they called 'cilt'ogho' (a carved birch water container)

xu' yii tuu ghilt'iidi tah cots dihdildaetl.

into which they poured water, they had put some down (feathers).

Yii di natl'akitelaes.

They were carrying this.

Nakiitdelaes xu'el ts'eketniigi.

They (Nah'aay) did not realize that they (the women) had brought this.

Xu'el nayadeh yedu' nakadel ts'en' nilk'ae dedaetze nilk'ae kadetl.

They returned with them and as they walked, the sisters went on both sides (of the trail).

Nadeltse'el ts'en' dayggu tles kiideldel ts'en'.

They dropped it (the down) while it was wet.

Nadetggani 'el bayahwdat'aen xu' dyaak.

As it dried it became noticeable.

Yii gha' k'a xuk'eh xukalkax ts'en' yii cots gha' xuk'ekadel.

Because of this, they (Tsaal K'aas' band) could track them, and because of the down, they followed them.

Ndaa c'ena' ts'en' c'ena' takedelde yii cu 'unaasts'en xuk'eh kakedel ts'en'

Somewhere they went through a stream and on the other side they went to the tracks and

'unaasts'en xu cots 'uka nahtedel.

they went after the down on the other side.

Yii 'enakehwdif'aan ts'en' xuk'a xuk'ekadel.

They found it again and they kept following them.

Xona Nah'aay delts'iide xona yihwts'en' kadeli 'el

Then they were approaching where the Nah'aay lived and

dzel dzel datninilaa xu' tkut'ae.

it was a place where two ridges meet.

'Utggat dzel ghaggez kulaende nehk'aedi naex delts'iinn 'iinn.

Up above, at a gap between mountains, were watchmen at a lookout.

Nah'aay 'iinn naex delts'iinn 'iinn

The Nah'aay watchmen

yet koht'aenn 'iinn ts'e'as dae' ghadelde 'uka naex delts'iinn ye yet hdelts'ii.
were staying there watching for any approaching people.

Xut'aa nic'ehnel'iin ts'en'.
They (Tsaaf K'aas' band) sneaked beneath them.

Tsaaf K'aas dui xona udaggeh ba'ooxe 'unaat ughatggeta kayizyaa ts'en'
Tsaaf K'aas went up to the gap and across from them and

'utggat kazyaay 'el nayggu Nah'aay 'iinn kaek'ae kulaende yet nek'ehwdimilaa.
he went up and examined the Nah'aay village below.

Ne'enggey kiinuiinn, Nah'aay 'iinn kaskae, yen nakeyek'aas.
The one they called Ne'enggey, the Nah'aay chief, they were training him.

Bekaey yii nakiltaes ts'en' xii'el nic'anakeyiltaes.
*They put him on a skin and they were tossing him up into the air.**

Xu' keyilnii keyek'aas ts'en' bests'ae kaen' yii kaen' keyuldiis.
They say that they trained him this way and with obsidian (arrows), which they shot at him (to train him).

Tak'ae 'utsen xugha tsendidyaa ts'en' xu' xu'elnii.
He (Tsaaf K'aas) went back down into the timber and told them.

"Xugha danaasts'en kudeldiyede yet k'a xona tak'ae kulaende tkut'ae.
"Across from there it is a short distance to the timber.

'Utggaa naex delts'iinn 'iinn yen 'iinn gha'aa noosya'a.
I should go up above, away from those watchmen.

Yihwts'en snuf'aende' nuhts'en' sla' ya'es'aas ts'en'
I'll wave to you when you see me there and

gaa xona 'utsiidze ke'uhdael de' "xu'elnii.
you come on up from down here," he told them.

'Utggat ye xugha'aa nic'iinel'iin ts'en'.
He sneaked up near them.

Xona naghilghaetl.
It was dark then.

T'ae' naghilghaetl 'el xona 'utsen nahtesdaetl 'el 'utsiidze xugha latet'aas.
It was very dark and they (the watchmen) went back down and he (Tsaaf K'aas) waved to them (his band) down below.

Natsiidze xu' kakezdaetl.
They came up from below.

Xu'en teshghidaetl ts'en' unayggat kehdidaetl.
They went over the mountain and down the other side.

* The word used here to refer to the blanket toss (or skin toss) is bekaey, which also means "dance."

Xugha'aa nihndaetl.
They stopped away from them.

Nayiis 'iinn xona c'aan 'aede t'ae' hdiitsiin ts'en'.
The warriors were without food and were very hungry.

"Xona ts'editsiin.
"Now we are hungry.

Nts'e ts'ehwtat'ael?" Tsaal K'aas 'ekenii.
What should we do?" they said to Tsaal K'aas.

Tsaal K'aas du', "Tsae'e."
Tsaal K'aas said, "Wait."

Duu t'ae' detse' tah dacts'iisi nin' duul' 'el detse' takunitset ts'en'.
He put some spruce twigs and little plants on his own head.

Titaha nlaen k'e'edeltsiin gha k'e.
He made himself look like an orphan.⁵

'Utsen xugha kediya ts'en' xut'aay niyaa.
He went down the hill to them (the Nah'aay) and he met them.

Kii'el ts'etniigi.
They did not know him.

'Utsoogho 'esk'ae kulade xutah tsabaey takakelaes.
Down there, where there is a place for dipnetting, they were taking fish out of the water.

Xughanggu niniyaa.
He stopped upland from them.

"Luux sle' 'olae," xu'elnii.
"Give me some fish," he told them.

Titaha xu' natedaas keyutnii ts'en'.
They thought that he was an orphan wandering around.

'Utgu tsabaey kakilaes.
They put fish up there.

'Ungge kiits'en' teldel.
They threw some up to him.

Yedu' 'esk'ae xu' t'aen 'en' tsabaey lukazdlaa.
They were fishing with dipnets and there was a pile of fish.

Yii 'el stana'idya ts'en' xu'el yadeh 'iinn tah na'idya ts'en'.
He went off with this (fish) and he went back among those he had come with, and

⁵ Titaha is a person who has no family or home: an "orphan." Literally, the word means "the one who is out in the country."

gha yii xona xu' ket'iix.
then they did this.

Ghadu' k'alii kon' kiidil'kaal ts'en' k'alii kiidesdlese ts'en' xu' It'el ts'en' keyeldiil.
Without starting a fire and without cooking, they ate this (fish) raw.

Xu' yaen' c'eghaan t'ifaen' ndat'aen'.
That is what they did while at war.

Xu' It'el ts'en' keyeldael'en' xugha'aa xona naghilghaedl el xutah cu nayideyaa.
Thus they ate this raw and it was dark out there and he (Tsaal Kaas) went back among them (the Nah'aay).

Gaa ts'akaay nakitdeldaegge 'iinn 'uka xuta nayidyaay.
He went looking for those women that they (the Nah'aay) had brought back.

Yet xona ndaa ndaa hdelts'iide xehwdifaan.
He discovered where they stayed.

Ye xugha'aa niiniyaa ts'en' naxu c'ezes ggan yii tah xunilkez'aa xunt'ae.
He stopped away from them and there a dry skin was stretched (on a pole frame).

Yii t'aa tah hdelts'ii.
They stayed in there.

Xugha'aa niyaa duu datezyaay c'ezes 'edahwdestnesi.
He came up to them (the women) and as he entered, the skin made a noise.

Ts'akae ts'ilghan dez'ae kadel'aen.
One woman saw her uncle.

Udadzidelen.
She was shocked.

"A!" dedyaak.
"A!" she exclaimed.

"Yedi'i gha c'etdinii?" yilnii.
"How come you said that?" someone said.

"C'ekol. Yae' nts'e desnii. Tiisdekay."
"It is nothing. I just said something. I flinched."

Gaa xugha yehwna dae' t'ifaen ts'en' xanidaydeltaen ts'en' yudelket.
Meanwhile he (Tsaal Kaas) brought her aside and asked her questions.

"Xu' koht'aenn naghalt'ae ts'en' su tkut'ae xu' kot'aex xu'?" Inii.
"How many people are there and what are they doing?" he said.

"Ndaedze 'el sacagha kahwtel'aen'de koht'aenn 'iinn nisdadel'aa
"In the morning when it becomes daylight, you and your sister should join the people

danae' kac'e'aas nae'.
upriver in the direction of the rising sun.

'Unae' tah tu'uhdaelde ndaезде 'el.
Go upriver with your sister.

Deyadahwdult'aen' de' igha' n'el statnes," dae' xu'elnii.
Identify yourselves so that we will know you," he told her.

Yihwts'en' xugha'en stanacnel'iin.
Then he sneaked away from them.

Yihwts'en Ne'enggey c'abaadl yii yii bekaey nakeyiltaes.
Then they (the Nah'aay) were tossing that Ne'enggey up in a skin.

Keyek'aas.
They were training him.

Yii c'a Tsaal K'aas du' xu' decen k'a' tlaegge' cet'a.
That Tsaal K'aas had an old arrow in his pocket.

Xugha yae' yii c'a 'utggat 'utgga dae' nantelts'edi 'el.
Just as he (Ne'enggey) was falling back down from above.

yicdelgots k'a' kaen'.
he shot him with an arrow.

Gaa uk'os nilghadet'aande yet yicdelgots.
He shot him here through his neck.

Ne'enggey naseldalggaac.
Ne'enggey ran hollering.

Yehwna k'aa xii'el c'enu' tez'aan.
Meanwhile they (Nah'aay) surrounded him to protect him.

Yits'en xona ba'ooxo nididaedl 'iinn dae' xu' tkilaak.
Then they (Tsaal K'aas' band) came out there.

Yak'a xona xu' xehwghia'an ts'en' xutlakehwghia'an.
Then they had a fight and they (Tsaal K'aas' band) killed them all.

Ye ts'akaey 'iinn du' xu'ez'ae xugha nidacdinilaay.
Those women were warned by their uncle.

"K'a danae' kac'e'aas ts'en xu' tu'uhdael de' su'use'e," dae' xu'elnii.
"You call my name when you go upriver toward the rising sun," he told them.

Xu' kenii ts'en' danae'.
They said this upriver there.

Yits'en yen 'iinn sutnii. "Yen 'iinn xu' nii de' xu' naxutnuluil
So he told them (his band), "So that you won't kill them (the women) by mistake,

'a xu' dayadaxehwdalt'iiil," dae' xu'elnii.
they are going to identify themselves."

Xu'el naytedeli 'iinn yii gha' xu'el ketnes ts'en' xutanakitdaetl.
They recognized them (the two women) as they went with them and they (the women) joined them.

Yii xona naghalt'aedze' xutl'akehwghi'aan.
Then they killed off many of them (the Nah'aay).

Yetde ghaye xona Ne'enggey Tsaal K'aas yae' bayehwghizet ts'en'.
That Ne'enggey had enraged Tsaal K'aas.

Nildziighiltsaat.
He cut him (Ne'enggey) open.

Iyii ciz'aann kadilnen ts'en' iciz'aann lt'el ts'en' lt'el ts'en' ghatsaet.
He took out his heart and he ate his heart raw.

Yiic'a its'en' kadacdi'aan.
Then he sang this song to him:

(song)

Ne'enggey tse tl'aa xaaaa
Ne'enggey your death

Ntae' ts'altlok tse tl'aa xaaaa
Your body was easy...

its'en' kadacdi'aan.
he sang to him.

"Ne'enggey ntae' xu daltloggo xu' 'alan'a dut'aen'e?" dae' yilnii ts'en'.
"Ne'enggey, your body is soft, so why did you do that (kill our people)?" he said to him.

Idzaey' lt'el ts'en' ghatsaet.
He ate his heart raw.

Dae' yehwk'e yaen' dae' badahwde'estnes.
I know only this much about it.

Skesdaey Tsaa Hghil'k'aan'de When the Aleuts Burned Caches

Katie John

De Laguna and McClellan (1981:642) describe Ahtna relations with the Chugach Eskimo, or Alutiiq, of Prince William Sound:

The inveterate enemies of the Ahtna were the Chugach Eskimo (sometimes called Aleuts locally). Many stories tell how the Chugach went up the Copper River to Batzubnetas, timing their visits so they could rob and destroy the fish caches while the Ahtna were hunting in the mountains, and pillaged Ahtna settlements all the way down the river. The Eskimo wanted copper bracelets, dentalia, good snowshoes, wooden dishes, and women. Once they killed the Klutina chief (Lower Ahtna) but were themselves defeated by a one-armed hero and an ingenious woman. After several such raids, the Ahtna claim to have slaughtered the Chugach on Mummy Island in Prince William Sound, thus ending the Eskimo attacks and justifying the composition of several victory songs.

Ahtna-Chugach relations are also summarized in McClellan 1975:225-229.

In the account here of warfare with the Chugach, one of the two Ahtna war chiefs is identified as an Upper Ahtna.

Skesdaey 'iinn 'udaadze kanakadel ts'en'.
The Aleuts used to come up from downriver.

Koht'aenn 'iinn du' 'udaadze luk'ae gha saenn 'el hdelts'ii ts'en'.
The Ahtnas used to stay downriver for salmon in the summer.

Ba' n'el ta keghiix.
They used to make dry fish.

Xeyde tsaa 'aax ba' nakelyiis.
In the winter they used to put the dry fish in caches.

Yik'ets'en 'el xona nahwtetk'asi 'el nin' ta hwticidze' naelhteldel.
Then afterwards, as it got cold, they all moved out into the country (to hunt).

Yii k'a xona Skesdaey 'iinn 'udaadze xutah xu' tkef'iix ts'en'.
At that time the Aleuts from downriver would do this to them.

Xu'el ketnesi 'udaadze htediil ts'en' xutsaa' takelk'aan.
They (the Ahtnas) knew that they were coming from downriver and burning their caches.

Kenkon'hdetsiy ts'en' xu'iye ta tl'anc'ehdelk'aan.
They set them on fire and burned up all their belongings.

K'ets'en saen nakodlaexi xu' yaen' tkef'aen.
After another summer they would do the same thing.

Yii c'a xona nixehwnelten ts'en.
Then they (the Altnas) got fed up with the situation.

"Xona nts'ey c'a xu ts'ulaexi?" kenii ts'en.
"Well, what should we do?" they said.

Datsii tat'aa hwts'en xu ts'ilghan denae 'el,
Down there from the head of the (Copper) river there was one man, and

gaa 'udaa' 'udaa' hwt'aenn yen yen c'a C'udalne'e bedi'a'.
there from those downriver people was another one who was named C'udalne'e
'Fierce One'.

C'ets'en' nighiziit.
He was vicious.

Yen xutah yighida'.
He was staying among them.

Yen kuzniic ts'en' datsooxe Tat'ahwt'aenn 'el yen xutah xutah xu'el tezyaa.
They took him and that 'Headcutters People' (Upper Altna) guy who was (also staying)
among them (and) he went with them.

Ts'eyh yii ts'eyh nduuy c'a ts'eyh c'a tahghitaan.
Canoes, they put several canoes in the water.

'Udaa' 'udaa' Ts'itu' k'a 'udaa' kakaef ts'en'
They paddled down 'Major River' (Copper River) and

'udaa' Taghaelgha xuk'a 'udaa' Taghael kadaa' naghilende keniide.
down from 'Dike in Water' (Taral), farther down where they say there is a watertall.

xuhwk'a kekuzdaetl ts'en' xona 'unset natu' vidighilende.
they passed by there, and there it (the river) flows out into the sea.

Yet ghaa 'el ta 'unsogho ts'es k'et ta konax kuzdlaa xu' ekenii yen Skesnaey 'inn.
Along there out on a rock there were houses that they say belonged to the Aleuts.¹

Koht'aenn 'inn c'a' xu' t'ehat'ul xu' konii ts'en'.
It is said that they were like this (on a rock island) to fend off the Altnas.

Ye gaa danggat danggu xu nihnudaetl ts'en' xu'el ts'eketnugi.
Upland from there, they went upland and they did not know them (that the Altnas were
there).

Naexdelts'inn.
They sat watching.

Nakaandelts'inn.
They sat prepared to fight.

¹ This rock is said to be Mamma Island in Orca Inlet south of the town of Cordova. The Altna name for this place is Bey nelaavi. Ridge I extends up to it.

Na'aa tinakedel ts'en' koht'aenn 'inn 'uka naexhdelt's'i.
They (the Aleuts) would come back out and they sat watching for Ahtnas.

Koht'aenn xuts'en' ghadelde xu' tkef'aen xu suhna'aen.
When the Ahtnas went toward them they did this and they (Ahtnas) saw them.

Xugha'aa nihnidaetl.
They stopped at a distance from them.

Is'eyh schwdisen.
They got their boat ready.

Yii c'a tinanaexdedel ts'en'.
They (the Aleuts) came out looking.

Ba'aa igge' xona dankidaetl konax k'et 'unse'.
They went back inside the house out there.

Is'eyh nse' nkeltset ts'en' 'unse' ta xii'a'.
They pushed the canoe out into the ocean away from them.

Gaa ts'ilghan C'udalne'e 'udaa' hwt'aenn C'udalne'e bedi'a'.
Here was this one downriver guy called C'udalne'e.

Danggu k'ay' taladezdlaa yii lyel ts'en' yii nakusax.
He grabbed willow branches that were hanging in the water and he hooked onto it (a branch).

"Xanse tah, nse' xantaey'," Tatlahwt'aenn nii.
"Out ahead (out onto the water), hurry on out," the Upper Ahtna man said.

Deghatggu ts'eyh danilt'u' k'a dangge nahwna'aenn 'el.
He tied the canoe above him and looked upland and

c'a nanggat naniide cu nts'e nt'ae'y yidi'a nakusaxi k'ent'aenn.
upland and upriver it looked like they were hooked onto something.

"Xantaey'," yilnii ts'en' keditset ts'en' 'unset.
"Hurry," he said to him as he (C'udalne'e) released it (branch)."

Konax ts'es k'e kuzdlaade yii t'aax tanii ts'ilghan tinanaexdedelh 'inn.
At the houses up on the rock some of the people on the watch

tinakitsaagga 'el xuk'a c'edan'a xut'aax nihnikaen.
ran out from inside and already they (the Ahtnas) had paddled there beneath them.

Is'eyh nilkenstaan xona xut'aa niinidaek.
They (the Ahtnas) had gotten under an overturned boat.

Utggadze tinanaexdedaetl 'el.
As they (Aleuts) came out above again to watch,

By hooking onto the branch, the downriver man, C'udalne'e, showed that he was hesitant about attacking

ts'ilt'en' kaen' ta xu'ec'ehdelgots daygge taketdaex.
they (the Ahtnas) shot them with a bow and arrow and they fell into the water.

"Cudalne'e sii tseh tiisggaet son'o dune'," Tat'ahwt'aenn nii ts'en'.
"Cudalne'e better not say that he was the first one to shoot," the Upper Ahtna man said.

Ye xona koht'aenn xugha nimdaetl ts'en' 'el katniic ts'en'.
As they realized that the Ahtnas had come to them,

datggu kayde xa'a dansogho tuu yii takelyel 'iinn 'el
they jumped here above out into the sea and

hwtsicdze' xutl'akehwdilnen ts'en'.
they (Ahtnas) killed them all.

Dayggu tuu yii kandake'aa tah cu xutsiciit c'ekelghel ts'en'.
As they (Aleuts) treaded water down there, they (Ahtnas) clubbed them on their heads.

Hwtsicdze' xutl'akehwghi'aan.
They killed them all.

W'ets'en' 'el ta xona xu' tkilaak ts'en'.
After they did this,

xuk'a kaek'ae ts'en' 'el ta xona da duu coxe xu nanaexdesdaedl 'el
they (other Aleuts) again came up from their home looking around and

'udaadze cu kanakesdaetl.
they came back up from downriver.

"Xu' tkunaexi c'eghaan yits'en' kulaexi,"
"It might happen that they will make war,"

kiinizen gha yen nanaexdesdaetl.
they (Aleuts) thought as they went back looking around.

'Udaadze xu ndaa le'e c'a tkonii tak'ae nin' ta ts'en' nakidaedl 'el
They say that from downriver somewhere they returned to the (Copper) river valley and

yedan'a taxeytdelnende hwnik'aadzi 'el.
it had already turned to winter and had gotten cold.

Denae dan'a tnae xona tezte'e k'a tiniyaa.
A man, an old man, had been sleeping and he went out.

Men tiniyaay 'el danae' c'ena' ts'en' k'e besiinn kenaes.
He went out to a lake and upriver toward a stream an owl was talking.

Ugheldze' idits'agga 'el c'a k'alii besiinn dadilehe.
He listened carefully and it did not sound like an owl.

Da'idya'a ts'en', "Nanae' c'ena' ts'en' nts'e konii besiinn kenaes,
He came in and (said) "Upriver toward the creek it seems like an owl was talking.

'adu li'i besiinn dadilehe kenaes.
but it doesn't sound like an owl now

Naxu bede kuya'an 'iinn xona c'ena' xehwnul'aen'e tets yit," xu'ekenii.
Someone clever should take a look at that creek during the night," he told them.

'Uxae' xu tnaey c'ehntel'iinn ts'en'
Some men sneaked upriver and

c'a xu ndaats'en besiinn kenaesde yihts'en' c'ehntal'iil.
they were sneaking to where the owl was speaking

'Uuuu nset tuu k'e nse' ts'abael nic'adini'aay tuu k'edze' dahdelts'ii ts'en'.
Upriver and out there over the water they (Aleuts) were sitting on a spruce sticking out over the water.

Besinn da k'e hnehdelghos.
They were imitating an owl.

Yu xangu xugha nic'ehnil'iin ts'en' ts'ilt'en' kaen' xutanc'ehnelidic.
They (Ahtnas) sneaked upland from them and shot them with bows and arrows.

C'tesh ts'ighan tac'ehnilidigi 'el dlok 'el kayahghiyaa ts'en'.
Before they shot the first one, they said with laughter,

"Besinn negha daddil'aen.
"He is imitating an owl for us.

Negha taghalts'et," dae' kenii.
He fell into the water for us," they said.

Nc'edlok xu' kenii.
They said this laughing

Na'aa xutanhdeldic ts'en' hwtsicdze' takedaex ts'en' xutl'akehwdilnen.
They shot them out there and they (Aleuts) all fell in the water and they (Ahtnas) killed them all.

Yihwts'en xona k'alii Skesnaey 'udaadze kanakidele kenii.
After that time they say that the Aleuts did not come back upriver.

Dae' hdine'.
That is what they said.

Dae' nahkalniis.
That is how they told it.



Sanford Charley's house at *Nataekle* (Batzulnetas), 1937. Left to right: Jeanie John (front), Kitty Henry, Steven John, Bessie Henry, Luke Henry, Jessie Henry, Shorty Frank (in doorway) Steve Frank, Jessie Sanford, Harry Frank, Sanford Charley, Lula Frank, Molly John, Mary John, Guy John, Banzaneta Billy Henry, Godfrey John, Alec John, Jimmy Henry. Photo Courtesy of Walter Phillips.

Lazeni Tinn Nataelde Ghadghaande When Russians Were Killed at 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulnetas)

Katie and Fred John

There are two stories from the upper Copper River area in which Russians (or non-Ahtnas) are killed. The earlier incident, portrayed here, took place at Nataelde (Batzulnetas). The later incident occurred at St'laa Caegge (Slana; see chap. 12). There has been considerable controversy about these events as depicted in the oral history of the Ahtna and other historic sources. I present here, in brief, evidence which suggests that the Batzulnetas incident occurred very early in the Russian colonial period, possibly in the winter of 1794-95, and involved the Samoilov party, and that the second incident at Slana occurred in June of 1848, and involved the Serebrennikov party.¹ Confusion about these dates stems from Strong's interpretation that the earlier Batzulnetas incident involved the Serebrennikov party (Strong 1971, John and John 1973).

The evidence for dating the first event (this chapter) must be balanced with the evidence about the second incident (chap. 12), as well as the approximate date of the Klwane Lake incident (chap. 11). The Batzulnetas story takes place in the fall-winter, and the Slana story takes place in the summer. According to information in Serebrennikov's journal, which was brought by Ahtnas to Nuchek, in Prince William Sound, his party was killed in late June of 1848 (Doroshin 1866:27-31, Hanable 1982:28).

We have record of another incident in which a large group of Russians and creoles was killed on the Copper River; this involved the thirteen-man Samoilov party of the Lebedev-Lastochkin company, who ascended the Copper River in 1794. Baranov, manager of the Russian-American Company, first learned in Kenai in June of 1795 that this party, led by Samoilov, had been killed somewhere on the Copper River (Tikhmenev 1978:42). Ketz (1983:10) believes that Davydov's account, based on his travel in Alaska in 1802-7, refers to the Samoilov party. Davydov, who does not mention Samoilov by name, nor a date, notes that Copper River Natives, prior to 1801, had killed everyone in a group of Russians except their commander (perhaps C'uket Ta' in the Johns' account here), that Ahtnas had tortured one of the Russians, and that the Russians had provoked the incident by abducting women and driving out the men in the winter without adequate clothing (Davydov 1977:189). The incident at Batzulnetas as told by the Johns corresponds with Davydov's account, except that there is no mention of Russians being tortured.²

Other factors in determining the chronology of these incidents are as follows: Yahnul Ta', chief in this story, is the earliest chief of Batzulnetas that

¹ I would like to thank Lydia Black, Katherine Arndt, Jim Ketz, and Anna Kertulla for commenting on earlier drafts of chaps. 10 and 12. The discrepancies among the historic record, the oral narratives, and Strong's 1973 interpretation of the Batzulnetas incident are discussed in a recent paper by Kertulla (1984).

² Katherine Arndt (personal communication) cautions that the historic record of Russian entry into Copper River is very fragmentary and that the Nataelde incident might have involved one of the other parties reported to have been killed on the Copper River. These include Barzhenov, who was killed ca. 1804-5, and Galaktionov and his interpreter, who also were killed ca. 1804-5. Further work with Lower Ahtna history may clarify the record.

Fred and Katie John know by name. They cannot date his death. Katie John states that the Kluane Lake incident occurred sometime after the Batzulnetas incident and perhaps ten years or less before the Slana incident. Fred John states that Takol'ix Ta', the chief of Mentasta who was the prime instigator in the Slana incident, was the son of an Ahtna woman and one of the Russians killed at Batzulnetas (and was Fred John's grandfather). I would thus estimate his birthdate as 1795-96. (See chap. 12 for other comments about Takol'ix Ta'.)

The most interesting figure in the account presented here is C'uket Ta', the guide and interpreter for the Russians. He was a Dastnaey, or Tanama, probably from Kenai, who deliberately mistranslated and concealed information from other members of the group while the Ahtna men prepared to retaliate.

I give particular weight to the accounts presented here by the Johns because 1) they are told in their Native language, 2) both of these incidents took place in the narrators' own country, 3) the Johns have repeatedly told these stories to Native and non-Native audiences, and 4) the transcripts have been reviewed and cross-checked with both narrators and compared with historical sources. It should be noted that Ahtnas from the lower Copper River also tell stories about these incidents, and there are details in those accounts that are not mentioned in the Johns's stories.

Katie John (KJ):

Lazem udetniinn 'inn tseh xona 'udaadze 'Atna' daadze kadelde.¹
The ones called Russians first were coming from down the Copper River.

'Atna' daadze kadelde xona koht'aenn'inn 'uka kadelde.
As they came up the Copper River they came (looking) for Ahtna people.

Luk'ece'e Na' keniide yet c'a xona.
At the place they call 'King Salmon Creek' (site where creek joins Copper River south of Drop Creek).

ts'utsaede tseh kughile'de, koht'aenn 'inn hdaghalts'e'.
some Ahtnas were staying where long ago there had been a site.

Kaek'ae kehwhil'aen'de.
They had a home there.

Yet xu nihndaedl 'el kaskae, ukaskae' yilaenn 'uka c'ekudelketde.
They (the Russians) arrived there and they asked for their (Ahtna) chief.

Yen xugha tihniitaen.
They brought him out to them.

Xeyuzniic ts'en' xeyeltsez.
They (the Russians) grabbed him and they whipped him.

Kedettsagh.
He was sobbing.

¹ The word lazem is a loanword into Ahtna from English 'Russian'. See the section on loanwords, this chapter.

Unii Nataelde hwts'en ciil utsucde inelyaexi 'aet zdlaa.
*From upriver at 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Baizulnetas) a young man who was raised by
 his grandmother had traps set.*

Decen 'aet tanatedaasi idezts'aan.
As he went back among the deadfall traps he heard him (sobbing).

Yii cu ugheldze' idits'agga 'el koht'aenn dadilaen ts'en'.
He listened carefully and it sounded like a person.

Detsucde ts'en' natesdeyaa ts'en' detsucde nahwnicini'aan.
He returned to his grandmother and he brought the news to her.

"K'alii cu nkohnesi dadilehe.
"It didn't sound like an animal.

Koht'aenn k'a daasts'ak.
I heard a person.

Koht'aenn kedetsaghadé de'ests'ak," dae' detsucde 'elnii.
I heard a person sobbing," he told his grandmother.

Utsucde xona ka'ooxo koht'aenn 'iinn kugha'aay hdelts'iinn 'iinn tah looyaal ts'en'.
His grandmother went over to the people staying nearby there.

"Naniit scaay xu 'aet tanatedaas nadaa'
"My grandchild was checking traps downriver

koht'aenn 'iinn hdelts'ii ts'en' xu' konii, dae' nii 'nts'e tkonii 'uzolyuunn'.
where people are staying and he says that you should be on guard.

Lazeni 'iinn gaa htadel koniix 'aenn kesdilt's'ak.
Someone let him know that the Russians would be coming here.

Xuk'a tk'ent'ae koniide," dae' koht'aenn 'iinn 'elnii.
And this is how the situation seems to be," and so she told the people.

Yukahts'en' sacagha 'el xona lazeni xuts'en' ghadel.
Sure enough, in the morning Russians were approaching them.

Yene 'iinn xuts'en' ghadeli 'el xona xugha hnidaetl.
They approached them and then they reached them.

C'uket Ta' c'ekudelket, "Bede 'iinn nuhkaskae' nlaen?" dae' xu'ekemii.
*C'uket Ta', 'Father of Buys Something', asked, "Who are your chiefs?" they (Russians)
 said to them.⁴*

"Yen, yen c'a nekaskae' nlaen," dae' kiilnii.
"He, he is our chief," they (Altnas) said to him.

⁴ C'uket Ta's identification as 'Aleut' by Strong or John and John 1973 was the result of a mistranslation. The John and other Altnas identify the Chugach people of Prince William Sound as Skesnaex in the English Aleut (see chap. 9). In this story C'uket Ta' is identified as Dastnaex (Tanana). He has an Athabaskan name, and he speaks Altna well enough to dupe the Russians.

"Yen kaskae xona negha tinoltaes," dae' kenii ts'en'.
"Bring the chief out to us," they said.

Xugha tikiiniltaen.
They brought him out to them.

Ba'aat xona c'ecenn' hwnidighi'aay 'ekeyitl'uun.
They (Russians) lashed him to a stump that stood there.

Keyeltsez.
They whipped him.

Yii c'a xugha kiidettsagh yen da.
He was sobbing to them, that man.

"Yatniil Ta' da t'of'aenn.
"You are doing this to Yatniil Ta' 'Father of He is Carrying It'."

C'udaghaine' ts'en' cu 'el 'ohtnes da doht'aenn?" dae' da xu'elnii.
Do you know you are doing this to someone who is vicious?" he said to them.

Yen 'inn k'alii kiidists'agga ts'en'.
They (the Russians) couldn't understand him.

C'uket Ta' kudetket, "Nts'e nii ts'en'?"
They asked C'uket Ta', "What is he saying?"

C'a nii dae', "Kedetsagh. 'Ebii, 'ebii, dae' nii ts'en'."
And he said, "He is sobbing. 'Ouch, Ouch,' he is saying."

C'uket Ta' yidi idits'ak k'alii xu'el inakolnigi.
C'uket Ta' did not tell them what he had (actually) heard.⁵

Yeghak'ae xona dahnidaetl ts'en'.
They entered his (the chief's) house.

"Xantaey' tinohdael."
"You (men) leave right away."

Is'iltan' keyizdlaay 'el 'uyunn 'el hwtsicdze' xuc'a' kuzniic ts'en'.
They took from them (the Ahtna men) all the bows and spears that they had.

Xuyunn' 'el kuzniic.
They took their spears.

Xutandliidulnemi gha tixuhniniyuut, denaey 'inn.
They drove them out so that they might freeze, those men.

Is'akaey 'inn yaen', ts'akaey 'inn yaen' kuzniic ts'en'.
Only the women, they took just the women.

⁵ Yatniil Ta' is chief of this territory. Here he calls out his own personal name, an act that is considered a very bold challenge.

⁶ This bit of mistranslation is the first evidence of collaboration between C'uket Ta' and the Upper Ahtnas.

Ts'ins'taey 'iinn du' 'alnaa gha kughines.
They took the old women, too, as slaves.

Denaey 'iinn yaen' tixuhniniyuut.
They chased out only the men.

Yii c'a xona Natael Na' ts'en' ngge' hteздаetl ts'en'.
And then they (the Ahtna men) started upland from 'Roasted Salmon Creek'
(Tanada Creek).

Yu' 'aede n'el xutandliidulneni gha xu tkiilaak.
They had been forced to go without (adequate) clothing so that they would freeze.

Ts'instaey 'iinn lazeni 'iinn xukužniic xu 'alnaa gha.
The Russians took those old women as slaves.

Lic'ae xugha nakighaan ts'en' xunansekele' ts'en'.
They (the Russians) killed some dogs and skinned them.

Xudezes lic'ae dezes ta xule' 'ehdelaes.
They gave them the skins, those dog skins.

Tadghusaex xu'ekenii.
They told them to tan them.

Yedu' takiide'aal.
Then they (the women) chewed on them.

Takiide'aal ts'en' tac'ehdesaex yii gha lic'ae zes.
They chewed on them and tanned them, those dog skins.

Sasluuggu' cuu koh't'aenn hdelts'ii ts'en' 'el ts'eketniigi.
They (the Russians) didn't know that there were more people staying at 'Small Salmon'
(Suslota).

Gha yet tixuhniniyuut ts'en' xuk'a 'utgge tah Sasluuggu' tah kakeздаetl ts'en'.
When they chased them out, they (the Ahtna men) went up above to 'Small Salmon'.

Yihts'en tah xona yu' 'el c'aan keyuyaan'a 'el xule' ghalyaa.
There clothing and food to eat were given to them.

Yii c'a 'utsiit Natael Na' tah xona kii'el nin'idaetl ts'en' xutah kedek'aas ts'en'.
Those who had come from down at 'Roasted Salmon Creek' (Tanada Creek) were training
(for war) among them.

Kadyiin' ts'en' c'etiye' 'iinn kadyiin'.
They made medicine, and the old men made medicine.

Sen 'el niltah nakehwdelaes.
They combined their medicine (powers).

The Ahtnas had never worked with dog skin before. It was 'engu, 'taboo'.

Sen 'el koht'aenn 'iinn ketk'aas.
The people trained with medicine.

Deyeni 'iinn, "Na'aat ts'abaeli c'eyits'e dighilcaax gha yii tatnulghotlde.
The medicine men said, "You try to break the biggest spruce out there."

Yihts'en del 'el tsighaa 'ei ta uyihts'en kadidaek xona k'etuhdeniil,"
If blood and hair come out of it, then you will get your revenge."

dae' deyen 'iinn xu'elnii.
so the shamans told them.

Xu' tkedyaak ts'en'.
So they did that.

Ba'aat ts'abael yii c'eyits'e dighilcaax xu xii'ekuldel takiitnelghodli 'el
Out there they charged against the largest spruce and they broke it and

del tah tsighaa del dilaenn 'el ta kadedaex.
blood, hair with blood, came out (of the spruce).

"Yet c'a xona c'a k'et'ohdeyaak.
"There you have made revenge.

Xona xu' tul'iil. Xu' tuhghaan," dae' xu'ekenii.
You will do like this. You will kill them," they told them.

Deyeni xu'ekenii.
The shamans told them.

Xona katk'aats.
Then they were trained.

Fred John (FJ):

Lazeni 'iinn nadaa'a nadaa'a 'Atna daa' tah c'ezdlaen dae' konii.
*It was said that they (the Russians) had appeared downriver, down the Copper River.**

C'ets'en' nikidaek ts'en'.
They were fierce.

Yedu' kaydii xutah 'udaadze xu htezdaetl lazeni 'iinn.
They were coming among them from downriver, those Russians.

Natsu Nataelde yet ta xona yet hmidaetl ts'en' nahwtezk'aats ts'en'.
They arrived down there at 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Bat'ubnetas) and the weather was beginning to get cold (in the late fall).

* Fred John told this portion of the story prior to the previous section told by Katie John. Portions here duplicate Katie's longer version.

C'uket Ta' yen du' dastnaey ghile' kenii

That man (the interpreter), C'uket Ta', was a Tanaina they say.

Yen du', "Ene!"

He told them (earlier), "Don't do it (don't attack them now)!"

"C'etsen' ekutsaas da su xona kuts'ughaan," kenii.

"It would be 'difficult meat' for us to kill them," they said.

"C'etsen' ekutsaas da su," dae' kenii.

"It would be difficult meat," they said.⁴

Xona du' xona 'udaa' kaskae 'udaa' tezyaa.

Then the chief (of Batzulnetas) went downriver.

Ilcuut ts'en' c'etsezi kaen' ltez.

He was taken and whipped with a whip.

Xoxoxoon'.

Oh-ho-ho.

"Na'udedzu xu' yen da t'ghofaen' da?" dae' nii.

"Should you do this to one calling his own name?" he (Yalniil Ta') said.⁵

Yii su c'a t'ae' "Ene' c'etsen' ekutsaas.

(C'uket Ta' said), "Don't do it. It would be difficult meat.

Ene!" yen 'unsogho dastnaey yilnii.

Don't do it (don't fight them now)!" the Tanaina from the west told him.

C'uket Ta' yilnii.

C'uket Ta' told him.

Xona 'unae' dana'idyyaa.

Then he (a Russian) came back in.

"Nts'e nii?" udetnii.

"What is he saying?" he asked him (C'uket Ta').

"Egedaa su nii le," dae' udetnii.

"He is just saying ouch," he told him.

Yihts'en duve' gaa xona lazeni yen 'inn.

After that then the Russians thought that he (Yalniil Ta')

"Egedaa" nii gela dae' keyutnii ts'en'.

had only said "Ouch."

K'ali' a xugha hwdil'axa.

They (the Russians) did not harm him (further).

⁴ Note that this phrase c'etsen' ekutsaas, 'difficult meat', appears in the war song that was made after the battle.

⁵ Yalniil Ta', chief of Batzulnetas, says his name to himself as his ultimate challenge to those who are whipping him. In other words, "Who are you guys? Are your names of higher value than my own? I am the authority over this country." The use of Ahtna personal names is a matter of complex etiquette.

Xunikelget ts'en' tixuhniniyuut ts'en'.
They were afraid of them (the Ahtna men) and they chased them out.

Tixuhniniyuut ts'en'.
They chased them out.

Nt'i c'a 'unae' Natael Na' tah 'ungge ta k'ehghidaetl xuhtah.
Well, up 'Roasted Salmon Creek' (Tanada Creek) they reached the upland country (at Suslota).

Kon'ts'en' tah hdelts'ii ts'en' ketk'aas xoxo!
Staying by the fire they trained (for war). Oh!

Gaa ketk'aas tah xona lazeni 'iinn ts'ughaan' kiiniziin' ts'en' ketk'aas.
Here they trained and they trained thinking that they would kill the Russians.

Yet xuhtah t'ae' t'ae' katk'aats.
Then they were well-trained.

'Udaat 'udaa' xugha ts'enkedel.
They came back downriver to them (the Russians).

Xoxo.
Ho-ho.

Xona tets xona xona c'edan'a ts'en' nayis gha katk'aats ts'en'.
At night then, after they had finished training for war.

C'uket Ta' 'uyuunn 'el xuc'a' 'uzniic ts'en'.
C'uket Ta' took the spears away from them (the Russians).

Xona tedze 'el ketsihwku'aan.
Then the fight started at night.

Xoxoon!
Ho-ho-ho!

Xugha dahnidaetl cu.
They (the Ahtnas) came in to them.

C'uket Ta' du',
To C'uket Ta',

"'Uyuunn 'uyuunn tighuggot de' nlaaghe ts'ultsesi," dae' kiidine' ts'en'.
they (the Ahtnas) said, "Pass the spears outside and we will take them from you."

Yen, "Ghat yet 'uyuunn zdlaa da k'e de?"
"Are there spears there?"

Zdaa ts'en' xona kedahwdilts'edi.
He (C'uket Ta') sat there and a noise was heard.

Be'eni be'eni nitsiil nu' xeyilces.
He shoved them (spears) out through a hole in the house.

Da'eni da'ents'en' tixeyeldel ts'en'.
Out there they took them away.

Tixeyeldel ts'en'.
They took them (spears) away.

Yehwna du' gaa du' lazeni 'iinn xona tl'akahwdilnen.
Meanwhile they killed the Russians here.

KI:

Ts'akaey 'iinn lazeni yuzniigi 'iinn denae C'uket Ta' yen xugha xu'ekenii ts'en'.
They (the Ahltnas) had informed C'uket Ta' and those women taken by the Russians about it (the plan of attack).

K'a' xiidziidi decen xidzendutsiyde xu' li'i taldese.
They (the women) put sticks in the (Russians') gun hammers so they wouldn't fire.

Hwnaghalt'aets'en' nakusdeniic.
Many of them (the guns) didn't work.

K'a' li'i tildese.
The guns didn't fire.

FJ:

Yik'ets'en su xona ts'ilghan su nac'ustniic.
Afterwards one man (a Russian) grabbed something (a gun).

"'Ene' nac'ustniic," yilni.
"Don't! He took something," he (C'uket Ta') said.

'Utggat kon' let ghan'aade yet ts'esezyel ts'en' yen c'a xona kuizelghaen.
He (the Russian) stuck his head up out of the smoke hole and they killed him too.

Teldic ts'en' kuigha da'ilggaac ts'en'.
They shot him with an arrow as they ran inside to him.

Yen kuizelghaen.
They killed him.

KJ:

Lazeni 'iinn hghighaan xu tetsde xuxghighaan.
When they killed the Russians they did it at night.

Xona sacagha xakal'aen'e 'el kahwtel'aen'e 'el,
Then in the morning at daylight, as it was just getting light.

"Xona c'etsen' nahzelghehe xona c'etsen' nahzelghehe."
"Then they killed the meat, they killed the meat," (they said).¹¹

Sacagha xuts'en' nahtesdaetl.
In the morning they went back to them.

Iyuunn 'el ta ts'elten' cu 'el xii'el c'eghaan t'il'aen'i yii, yii 'el 'unse tes 'enhdidaetl.
With the spears, bows, and weapons of war, with those they climbed up a hill.

Yits'en' xuts'en' c'eghaan c'elus kadahdi'aan.
Then they sang a war song to them.

Yii bendadezelnak, just half.
I have forgotten some of it, just half (I remember).

C'uket Ta' tseh xuts'en' hghiya' kadahdi'a'.
They sang of what C'uket Ta' had told them earlier.

"C'etsen' 'ekutsaasi. Tsae' doht'ae!" dae' C'uket Ta' xu'edine.
"It would be difficult meat. You should wait!" C'uket Ta' had told them.

Yii xuts'en' kandahti'a':
They sang this again to them:

(song)

Kadii c'etsen' 'ekutsaas.
Now it would be difficult meat.

Kadii c'etsen' nahzelghehe.
Now the meat has been killed.

Yaa 'aaaaaaaa.
Yaa 'aaaaaaa.

Ghayet lazeni 'inn ghadghaande c'a koht'aenn 'inn all xuc'a' natesdaetl.
The Altnas left from where they killed the Russians.

Cezaege' yaen' ghayet 'ila' ts'en'.
Only the corpses were left there.

Koht'aenn 'inn kon' kukeltsiin.
The Altnas cremated them.

Ts'abael 'el kugha ketsael ts'en' yii niidze kon' kukeltsiin xu xutl'ac'ihdelk'aan.
They chopped spruce for them and they built a fire in the middle of the area and burned them.

¹¹ That is, they ended the war.

Yii gha k'adii C'ecenn'gha kedi'aan.

That is why this place is now called 'By the Stumps' (site below Batzulnetas).

C'ecenn' kulaen gha lazeni 'iinn 'ughelk'aande.

Stumps are there where the Russians were cremated.

FJ:

Yihts'en xona lazeni ts'en' ni'ilyaan 'iinn ts'ilghan yen c'a nalkaay Itsiin.

Then there was one Russian half-breed who was wounded.

Yii su xona C'uket Ta' nakezt'l'uun.

They gave C'uket Ta' a set of clothes.

Xuc'a' naytesdeyaa.

He started back away from them.

'Uniidze Stl'aa Caegge xuyae' nansogho yae' nakusdaetl.

They passed 'Rear River Mouth' (Slana) going downriver.

Xona nalkaay Itsiinn du'.

Then the guy who was wounded said,

"Xoxoxcon', Tatlahwt'aenn 'iinn nuhgha nahwtseini.

"Oh-ho, I will tell on you Headwaters People.

Nen' k'et ni'ulyaal xa', "dae' nii.

You will not live in this country," he said.

Yihts'en' gaa duu k'eze ts'ekedaetl.

Then they (some Ahtnas) came up beside him.

'Uyuunn kaen' xu'uggaet ts'en'.

He tried to thrust a spear at them.

Yii su xona C'uket Ta', "Dii nanae' nanae' xuts'en' na'uhdaal.

Then C'uket Ta' said, "You go back upriver to them.

Ghan sacts'en' dadedlii xa'.

I don't like what he is saying.

Xona nakiizulghaeli, "dae' nii ts'en'.

They ought to kill him," he said.

Yii su xona 'unae' ts'ilghan nateltlet ts'en' Baa Laets T'aax ts'en'.

Then one guy ran back upriver to 'Beneath Gray Sand' (point near Slana).

Yitah xona 'unggat kon' idik'aan.

Up from there a fire started.

"Nt'i c'a dats'ii su dzaenn kulaen?

"How come (there is a fire while) it is still daytime?

Yidi gha kon' dgholk'aan?"
Why are you building a fire?" (the wounded man asked).

"Nt'i tats'atnak gaa ts'edults'e'e."
"Well, we are tired and should stay here."

Xoxoxoon'.
Ho-ho-ho.

Xelts'en' 'el naniidze 'uyuunn sogh k'ent'ae xu naniidze.
In the evening from upriver (came) spears like frost crystals.

Yii su gaa nalkaay nlaenen, "Tat'ahwt'aenn 'iinn nuhgha nahwtxelnic 'iinn."
That wounded guy said, "I will tell on you Headwaters People."

Xona 'uyuunn kaen' tikiinilt'ak nanset tayenk'et.
Then they walked him out to the river flat with a spear (pointed at him).

'Uyuunn uts'en' kutkaes.
He was stabbed with spears.

Del yaen' 'unse dilta' kukulaak.
Only blood was left there.

Yii su xona C'uket Ia', "Xona ugheli xu' t'gholaexi gha su," dae' nii ts'en'.
Then C'uket Ia' said, "That is good that you did this."

Xona yihts'en nahtesdaetl ts'en'.
Then they returned.

Yet xona lazeni 'iinn tsilahwdelnen.
And then they had killed off the Russians.

Loanwords and Upper Ahtna Contacts with Other Peoples

One way to measure the impact of other peoples on the Upper Ahtna is to compile a list of loanwords—words that have been borrowed by the Upper Ahtna from other languages. We focus here mainly on words borrowed by the Upper Ahtna from non-Athabaskan languages. (It is possible also to trace borrowings into Upper Ahtna from other Athabaskan languages, but the patterns are more subtle and harder to detect.)

Thirty-eight non-Athabaskan and three Kutchin loanwords have been recorded in Upper Ahtna (Kari, forthcoming; Thompson, forthcoming). These are listed here with an approximate date of the borrowings:

from Alutiiq (4)—prior to 1800

dzenax 'fermented fish'

hugii 'waterproof basket'

munak 'lamp, light'

yulok 'window covering'

from Tlingit (1)—prior to 1800

hugel 'bag'

from Russian (21)—1780 to 1850

gaan 'trade goods'

sdaal 'chair'

sutnak 'wool fabric'

menic 'steambath switch'

tsaey 'tea'

guice 'coffee'

demba 'checkers'

gusgeggaay 'cat'

dayaan 'leader, spokesman'

gelis 'cross'

ndalasdui 'hello'

dagoli 'axe'

ladimen 'hemp rope'

bule 'soap'

basdax 'butter'

tseui 'teapot'

lasgih 'chewing tobacco'

galdas 'playing cards'

seldaedze 'soldiers'

tsilgah 'church'

menlaes 'icon'

from French via Upper Tanana and Slavey jargon (3)—1830 to 1870

'eldul 'tea'

lzaasi 'money'

ldlem 'lock'

from Upper Tanana or Tanacross via Kutchin (3)—1850 to 1870

denehtlaa 'paper', 'book'

nodlae 'white people'

kihacy, gimhacy 'preacher'

from English (10)—after 1885

minni 'beans'

begni 'bacon'

cenuu 'canoe'

sili 'silk'

sdo 'stove'

zayy 'rice'

lazen 'Russians'

yam 'yarn'

xox 'horse'

telgach 'telegraph'

There are other trade items that entered the Ahtna area for which the Ahtna

did not borrow words, but either coined new words or extended the meanings of existing words, e.g. *uyi na'sna'aem* 'mirror', which literally means 'that into which we look', and *k'a* 'arrowhead' extended to 'rifle' or 'gun'.

This small number of loanwords reflects the isolation of the Upper Ahtna prior to the beginning of the twentieth century. A total of 95 loanwords in all four of the Ahtna dialects has been recorded, with the Western dialect, closest to Cook Inlet, having the most Russian loans (62). In comparison, in the Kenai dialect area of Tanaina—where there had been resident Russians since 1786—about 350 Russian loans have been noted. In the Upper Cook Inlet dialect area of Tanaina, where there were no resident Russians but a great variety of trade goods, about 200 Russian loanwords have been documented. The Tanacross and Upper Tanana people to the north, who were even more isolated from Russian trade goods, have only four Russian loanwords (Thompson, forthcoming).

Especially interesting in Upper Ahtna are the loanwords that entered the language from the north, the three French words and the three Kutchin words. None of these six words is found in the other Ahtna dialects. The French words are part of the "Slavey jargon" trade language used by Athabaskans and French traders in Canada.

A recent paper by Ketz and Arndt (1985) summarizes Russian-Ahtna trading relations during the nineteenth century.

Men Uggaann' Cdilaende Kadghaande When They Were Killed at 'Lake That Has an Arm' (Kluane Lake)

Katie John

The battle that took place between the Upper Tanana and the Southern Tutchone is a well-known event in the oral history of the eastern Alaska-southern Yukon Territory area. It is known as the "last Indian war." The incident seems to have occurred around 1838-40, a time of great tension in the general region. There was a devastating smallpox epidemic in Alaska, and the Southern Tutchone were being exploited in trade relations by the coastal Tlingit.

Brief published accounts of this war are in English. Three Upper Tanana versions appear in McKennan 1959:171-172 and Guédon 1974:153. McClellan 1975:518-519 states that the Southern Tutchone place this battle at Drza-deash Lake, to the southeast of Kluane Lake.

Katie John's account is the first published Native-language version of the event. This story was passed on to her as part of 'Alts'en' Tnaey clan history. She tells of the lover's quarrel that preceded the battle, and details the role of the 'Alts'en' Tnaey war chief who was from Nataelde. She recounts the training for war, and the use of recycled copper arrowheads, and notes that there was brutality displayed on both sides. This account presents in detail a non-partisan, third-party point of view.

Danooxo ndaane yet ts'en koht'aenn daniit K'estsiigge ts'en.
(There were) some people from somewhere upriver, from 'Outlet' (the Northway area).

Xuhts'en koht'aenn 'iinn, 'unii tsuux Nin' Hwt'aenn 'iinn,
Some people from there, upriver and by the water (on the upper White River), the Nin'
Hwt'aenn, 'Land People' (Southern Tutchone),

'alts'eni 'iinn xutahnidaetl ts'en' ts'akae ts'uniisi kenii ts'en'.
five of them came among them (the Upper Tanana) to take a woman, they say.

Ts'akae xu'el natedaas.
A woman went back (to upper White River) with them.

K'alii hyitniigide yae' de'el nakiiteltaes.
Without (one of them) marrying her, they started back with her.

Nduuyde xu k'alii su xu'el stayizedi xu'a xiic'a' 'unae' natesdaetl.
She had not spent much time with them when they left her behind and went back upriver.

'Unuuxe denenn' k'ets'en' nahtesdaetl.
They started back upriver toward their country.

Nden k'enihwdinized t'ae' xona xu'enalnak.
After some time passed, she forgot all about them.

"K'adii k'alii le'e sa natasdaala.
"Now he probably won't come back for me."

Li'i c'a dest'aey udebah yaen' zesdaay."
"I won't wait for him any longer," (she thought).

K'adii xu denae xu natedaas.
And then a(nother Upper Tanana) man returned.

"Yen 'el nghosda'," nu ts'en' xu' xu' dyaak.
"I should stay with him," she said and it happened that way.

Yen 'el nezdaa.
She stayed with him.

Ts'ik'ey xey yaen' yen u'el yighida' ts'en' xona nakulggun'u 'el
She had stayed with him only one winter and it became spring and

nakulggun'u 'el da yen denae 'iinn 'uniidze nakidaedl 'el.
when it became spring, those (Tutchone) men returned from upriver.

Cu kan' 'el zdaay xiik'e na'idya.
She was staying with another husband when he came back to her.

Yeda denae taagga 'iinn xu'el natedel.
Three men came back with that man.

Yii denae dae' t'ae' kiizelghaen ts'en'.
They beat up that (other) man (her current husband).

Xii'el skahwghilaa ts'en' kiizelghaen.
They fought with him and beat him up.

Xona ts'akae xiic'a' na'ilcuut ts'en' cu 'unae' ta de'el nakiiteltaen.
Then they took that woman from him and they went back upriver with her again.

Yen denae de kiizelghaen ts'en' u'aa xiic'a' nateltaen.
They beat up that man and took his wife away.

Xuhk'a xuk'e xiitezyaa.
Then he started to follow them.

Nae' xuk'e yayaal ts'en' xona nihneyaali 'el xugha'aa niniyaa.
Following them upriver, as they camped overnight, he stopped near them.

Keltaets.
They were sleeping.

Xucagha dactnel'iin ts'en' ts'akae behwtez'aan ts'en'.
He sneaked in while they were sleeping and he woke up that woman.

Gge' dela' 'el yalatet'aasi 'el, "Gge' zidaa," k'a yakoltsii.
He motioned to her with his hand, signaling to her, "Get up."

Its'en' tin'idya ts'en'
She went back out to him and

ba'aax ts'en da ts'inaann xu' keltaets ts'en', ts'inaann xutacteldic.
from outside, across from where they were sleeping, he shot an arrow among them.

Nadaegge 'iinn naletnildic.
He hit two of them with one shot.

Yen 'iinn ghilaax ts'en' gaa ts'ilghan nadaegge 'iinn le'i
They died, but there were a couple of others who

gaa yen 'iinn du' danae' ta kiic'a' naggaan'telyaa ts'en'.
ran away going upriver.

Xuk'a xiidaghidaetl.
They escaped from him.

K'alii xu'ighaala.
He didn't kill them.

Yen ts'akae na'ilcuut ts'en' natesdyaa.
He took that woman and started back.

Ts'akae 'el na'iltaen.
He took the woman with him.

Nduuy nic'ehwdinizedi 'el le'e yen denae 'unae' nahtesdaedl 'iinn
Sometime later it seems that those men who had gone back upriver

'unooxu xiigha nakolnic ghale'e.
told others (what had happened).

Xona 'uniidze xuts'en' nayiis keltsiin.
Then from upriver (at Kluanine) they (Southern Tutchone) made war on them (Upper Tanana).

'Uniidze xuts'en' htezdaetl.
They started toward them from upriver.

Dzel Tahwt'aenn dae' xu' 'ekenii.
These (people being attacked) were the Dzel Tahwt'aenn 'Among the Mountains People', they say.¹

Danoox koh't'aenn hdaghalts'e'i 'iinn.
These people were staying upriver.

¹ These are the Upper Tanana people of the upper White, Chisana, and Nabesna rivers. See Jack John Justin's description of some of their territory (chap. 20).

Dzel Tahwt'aenn 'iinn dae' xu xu'ec'ehdifa'.
They called them Dzel Tahwt'aenn.

Kots'iic
Kots'iic (personal name of the Kluane chief)

Men Uggaann' Cdilaenide yet delts'iinn 'iinn c'a t'aenn 'iinn.
and the people staying at 'Lake That Has an Arm' (Kluane Lake), are the ones who did it.

Yen 'uniidze tezdaedl 'iinn.
They are the ones who came from upriver.

Kots'iic xu'el ghayaal.
Kots'iic was walking with them.

'Uniidze xugha hnidaetl.
They came to them from upriver.

Xukaskae' c'a Kots'iic bedi'a'.
Their chief was called Kots'iic.

Danooxu dzel tah delts'ii ts'en' xugha hnidaetdl 'el
Up to the mountains where they were staying they came to them and

yet c'a denae xeyuzniic ts'en' kiiniltaen ts'en' xu kones ts'en' kakiidit'aats.
they took that (Upper Tanana) man there and carried him and they cut him up while he was still alive.

Kiiggaann' 'el kiits'ent'aas.
They cut off his arms.

K'adii kiizelghaen.
They killed him then.

Yik'ets'en' 'el da xona ba'oox kon'ta nahtedel ts'en'.
Afterwards they went out among the campfires.

Denae ye zdaa.
A man sat there.

Tikiiteltaen kiizulghael tikiiteltaen.
They took him out, intending to kill him, they took him out.

Baygge nahwnal'aen.
He looked down.

"Sk'edic'ule' de'," deta' 'elnii.
"Do something to get revenge for me," he said to his father.

"Sk'edic'ule' de'.
"Do something to get revenge for me."

Deta', "Xu'aa tiniyaas.
His father said, "Go outside.

K'adii kalguul ts'en' 'a higgaay nk'ehts'en' tayaal.
As it becomes spring a puppy will follow you.²

Xuk'a xugha tiniyaas," yelnii.
Go out there to them," he told him.

Ba'aa xu'el tiniyaa ts'en' xona ba'aata kones ts'en' kakiidit'aats.
He went outside with them and then they cut him up out there while he was alive.

Nadaex ba'ooxo kon'ta konax nahnidaedtl ts'en'
Two of them came back out to the campfire and

koht'aenn 'iinn xuyuu' n'el ta xu'iyuunn' xeyizdlaa.
the people had clothing and spears.

Ts'ilten' i'el c'eghaan xu'el all xu'e dakehwghinilaa ts'en'
They took their bows, weapons, and everything away from them and

nsogho kon' yeta du' nadaexi xey taxeyniidze tsenhdeit'it ts'en'
then, while it was still midwinter, they dumped snow on the fire and

nakon'htnelnak.
they put out the fire.

Xutandliidulneni gha xu' tke'laen.
They did that so they would freeze to death.

Ts'ilghan ts'inst'e' du' xu' tke'laen hwna;
In the meantime one old lady did this;

dansogho kon' dezkan' siit cii yidi'i yidilnen ts'en' ba'ooxo nadaexi t'aa idilnen.
she took a burning ember from the fire and she put it beneath the snow.

K'ey k'ey vitah siit dilnen ts'en' da'ooxo nadaex t'aa idilnen.
In birchbark, she put it in birchbark and she put it under the snow.

Da'oox xu konax nahwdeltsiinn t'aa ta ik'iidilnen.
She put it out there beneath where a house was standing.

Kon' niidze du' nadaexi tsenhdezogh ts'en' all nakon'htnelnak.
They swept snow onto the fire and put it out.

Uniidze kiidihnidaidlde naxu delbaex dae' nt'aey deghaec ta ket'aenn.
When they (Tutchone) had come from upriver, they had cloth coats.

Yii yaen' xuts'en' teldaetl ts'en'
They gave them only these (cloth coats) and

c'a xudandghaeg'e yet xudanestle' n'el all xuc'a' all xuzniic.
they took from them all of their fur coats and fur pants.

² This is a prediction of some kind, but Katie John makes no mention of the outcome.

Ts'ilghan ciil gaa dedanestle' dedandghaege' c'a da'ooxo nadaexi t'aghildaetl.
One man put his fur pants and fur coat out there under the snow.

Yen yaen' xu' dyaak.
Only he did this.

Yen yaen'.
Only he.

Na'oox all xuc'a' natesdaetl 'unae'.
They (Tutchone) started off upriver away from them.

"Xutandliidulneni gha," dae' xu'ekenii.
"Let them freeze," they said.

Ts'akaey 'iinn nduune 'iinn yen 'el nahwtelyaa 'unae' na'.
They took several women with them up the river.

Taagga 'iinn 'el nahwtelyaa ts'akaey 'iinn.
They took three women with them.

Yen 'iinn kuzniigi yen 'iinn 'el nahwtelyaa.
They took them and started back with them.

Nahtesdaedl 'el dan'a ts'inst'e' danooxu kon' t'aydilneni yii kanadilnen ts'en'.
After they left, that old lady who had hidden the hot coal brought it back out and

yii kaen' nakiidilk'aan ts'en' xukonn' nakusdlaet.
they built a fire with that and they had fire again.

Ye denae deyuu' 'el stanilaay yi kanaghildaetl ts'en' yii 'el nastl'uun ts'en'.
That man who had put his clothes away brought them out and got dressed in them and

stanaxadetiis ts'en' dae' debae cu zelghaes.
he went back out hunting and killed some sheep.

Izes ta yaen' nadelyaes.
He brought back just the skins.

Izes yaen' nadelyaes debae ghaan ts'en'.
He brought back just the skins as he killed sheep.

Yedu' ts'akaey 'iinn tets ta takiidesaex.
Then the women tanned them during the night.

Takiidesaex ts'en' ta yu' kedeghaan.
They tanned them and they made clothing.

Yu' kedeghaan ts'en' all naghalt'e' ts'en' xuyuu' nakultsiin.
They made clothing and mended many of their clothes.

Xey yu' all nakadghaan ts'en' k'alii ts'ilghan 'el dliitdilzesi.
They finished making winter clothes and not one person froze to death.

Yii c'a xona datsii Nataelde hwts'en ts'ilghan denae yen 'usdeniic.
Then one man was brought from 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulnetas).

"C'eghaan tse' negha ghule'e," dae' udetnii ts'en'.
"You should be war chief for us," he was told.

Yen, yen kuzniic ts'en', 'Alts'en' Tnaey ghile'.
He, the one that they took, was from the 'Alts'en' Tnaey clan.

Denaecdael becdi'a'.
He was called Denaecdael.

Yen, "Xona 'unae' ne'el negha c'eghaan t'ul'aen'.
They told him, "You should make a war upriver on our behalf.

Negha denaey 'iinn 'el 'ik'aas," kiilnii.
Train the men for us," they said to him.

Yen xona xuzniic ts'en' k'adu' gge' nactes'aan ts'en' xona all xona 'unae' htezdaetl.
Then he took them and just as the sun was rising they all started upriver.

Kadel ts'en' danii na' K'estsiigge yet ta xona hde'aat 'iinn
They were going along and they left all their wives

dets'enekaey 'iinn 'el all nihnilaa ts'en'.
and children up at 'Outlet' (Northway).

Yeta koht'aenn nihnilaa.
They left them with the people there.

Yehwts'en xona htesdyiits 'unae'.
Then they started on the warpath upriver.

Nae' kadel ts'en' xu'el kolgon' ts'en' naxu ketk'aas ts'en'.
As they went upriver it became spring and they were training there.

C'etsen' yaen' naxu lt'eli, sos, udzih, yidi hnil'iix ts'en'.
They ate only raw meat; bear, caribou, whatever they saw,

hdela' kaen' k'a kiizelghaes ts'en' xu' nt'ae ts'en' xeyeldael,
they killed it with their hands and they ate it (raw) like that,

udel' ughaxdze'a k'alii cu 'unse kiidedlese ts'en'.
blood and all, without cooking it.

Ts'ilghan ciil xu'el yayaali lt'eli yuix ts'en' natkuuy.
One young man going with them was eating raw food and kept vomiting.

Nayiis i'el denes k'alii hwtasniigi.
He knew that he would not live through the war.

"K'alii sdadzighizeli.

"You won't live long.

Kananughuya'!"

You should turn back!" (they told him.)

Yen ciil du', "Ene', xuk'a nuhw'el txosya' xuta tsilaak de'," xu'elnii.

The young man told them, "No, I'll go with you even if I am to get killed among them."

Xugha xu'el kulggon'.

It became spring for them.

'Unae' kadelne dae' gaat ts'akae stanakiinilaenn 'unae'

As they were going upriver, one of the women they had taken up there

'utggu xuc'a' stanac'iinel'iin.

had sneaked away from them up above.

Yen 'uniidze naadaal xut'aay na'idya.

As she returned from upriver she met them (her people).

Yen xona kudetket ts'en'.

They asked her questions.

"Chayet tak'ae konax delts'iide

"There in the river valley they stay in houses, and

xu' xon 'iinn xukonaghe' xu kulaen xu' koht'aenn xu' naghalt'e'e 'el, xu'elnii ts'en'.

there are their houses in great number," she told them.

All xu'el naykalnic.

She told them everything.

Yi gha xa 'el ketnesi k'etkit'ae ts'en' kadel 'unae'.

Thus, it seems that they knew this as they went upriver.

'Unaa men ce'e Men Uggaam' Cdilaenn kiinii ba'aa ts'ihnidaetl.

They came out across the big lake that they call 'Lake That Has an Arm' (Kluane Lake).

Kiibaagga nae' kadel ts'en'.

They went up along the shore.

Yedu' t'ae' hwdeltael ts'en' xii'ets'udelniide.

Since it (the lake) was very wide there, they were feeling timid.

'Unaa xona tak'ae kulaende dzet'aeke ts'en'

Across where there was a timbered area on the mountainside

kaek'ae kulaende kakewhdel'aenn ts'en'.

they saw where the village was located.

'Unaats'en yaen' takadel.

They could approach only from the other side.

"Unoos yaen' nandeldiy naann ta 'unaann xona kets'udaehi," kenu.

"Let's cross up at the narrows," they said.

Yet nandeldiyde 'unse ts'itahwniidze tandzaey taz'aan.

There at the narrows there was an island in the middle.

"Unaa ts'ilghan c'ilaen xu ske'iyaa!"

"Go across one at a time!" (the war chief said.)

Ske'iyaa ts'en' tandzaey k'et kakedael.

As they went across, they climbed up onto the island.

Xu' tke'taen.

That's what they did.

Gha yet Men Uggaann' Cdilaennn hdelts'ii 'iinn

There among the people staying at 'Lake That Has an Arm'

ts'ilghan denae unaegge k'es kol.

was one man who had one eye missing.

'Utsuuxu men k'et ten kenketsaehi.

Down below on the lake they had chopped through the ice.

Yii ten nu' tanac'ekelox ts'en'.

There they were fishing through the hole in the ice.

Tsabaey xanc'elyaesi xu' tke'tiix.

They were pulling up trout.

Yii k'eh't'aenn ts'en' 'utsuuxe kediya.

As they did this he (with one eye missing) came toward the lake.

'Utsuuxe ta tiside'aa ts'en' tsabaey kaltaes.

Looking at the water, he pulled out a trout.

Unu' men k'e hwnal'aenn 'el,

Looking from the ice hole out on the lake,

'unuux nu' nae' men k'enaann koht'aenn kadeli kadelaen.

he saw people crossing the lake up there across from the ice hole.

Ngge xugha tanahwnicset.

He brought the news to them up above.

"Yi'unset 'unaa nanuux yaen' men k'e yaen' ts'adel k'etkat'aen," dae' xu'elnii.

"It looks like someone is crossing the lake up there," he told them.

Ye xukaskae' Kots'iic,

Their chief, Kots'iic.

"Naxu men k'et tayiits kolaexi," yii su 'alnii.
"That is a mirage out on the lake," he said.

"Nts'e do'ohts'agga da yaen' su tnii," dae' ku'elnii.
"Don't listen to what he says," he (Kots'iiic) told them.

"Dzel Tahwt'aenn 'iinn yet dan'ata su xutadlihwidilnen ts'en'
"They already caused the Dzel Tahwt'aenn to freeze to death and

xu' naghalt'e' ts'en' su k'alii xuk'etl'aa kac'iyaaale.
none of them has escaped.

Xutadliidelnen.
They have frozen.

Nts'e xa' nuxa nuhwgha kunesi c'a nuhwk'e htadeh?" dae' kaskae nii.
How could they still be alive and following you?" the chief said.

Gha yen denae du' u'aat 'iinn naghalt'e' kiilnii.
That chief had many wives they say.

Yii c'a ka'ooxo "Cu ts'akae cu yen cu 'oosniis," yelnii.
Outside there "I should take another woman," he said.

Na'oox yen ts'ezdaann, kultsaenn.
Nearby there was someone staying, a girl who was observing the puberty ritual.³

Yen ts'en' looyaali 'el koht'aenn 'iinn xunidaetl gha'ooxo.
As he walked toward her the (Upper Tanana) people surrounded them out there.

Gha yen denae unaegge' k'es kolen Taxii' dae' becdi'a'.
That one man with one eye missing was called Taxii'.

Yen 'utsuuxu ts'en kakudel'aen tanahwnicset ts'en'
He had seen them down by the water and had brought the news but

k'alii yae' sutnii kiilnii ts'en'.
they did not believe what he said.

Yedan'a ta sta'iltlet 'unggu.
He had previously run upland.

'Utgu dzet kaltlet ts'en' xu hwts'en ta koht'aenn 'iinn ghadyes 'el tnes ts'en'.
He ran up the mountain knowing that the people were coming to make war.

Gha yet Men Uggaann' Cdilaenn c'eldaan' 'iinn danaa datsen
Some of the 'Lake That Has an Arm' people were across and down below

ngguden ts'eyh nkenatdaxde.
where the boats dock.

Already Nondlae 'iinn 'el ketnes.
They already knew the white people.

³ See footnote 1 in chap. 4 on the Athabaskan puberty ritual.

Nondlae 'iinn k'aa' 'el k'atse' 'el takezdlaa.
They had white man's guns and bullets.

Yen 'iinn yihts'en' nahtesdaetl ts'en' c'a c'ukaedi gha.
They had gone there to go shopping.⁴

All c'eldaan' 'iinn xuhtah kanakadaetl.
Not all of them had come back up.

Kon' k'aedi k'alii su koht'aenn nilt'e' 'el kedyak ts'en'.
Not very many people were left in the village.

Xutahnidaetl ts'en' dze'a xutl'akuhwdilnen.
They (the Upper Tanana people) came among them and killed them.

Tseh xu'el yayaali natkuuy It'eli yiix ts'en'.
The one who had been going along with them, who vomited while eating raw meat,

yii xunihdidaetlde konax xutahnidaetl 'el yedu' xukeghaann 'el.
when they surrounded them and they went among the houses, and they were killing them,

yedu' ts'ilghan natkoyde xutah yayaali.
that one who had vomited, he went among them.

Yen du', "K'alii koht'aenn t'etiil," nii ts'en'.
He said, "I did not kill anyone."

Nildaagga ts'ixacdedyel 'el kiizelghaen ts'en' c'etah 'ilts'et.
He came out through a doorway carrying a gun and they (Tutchone) killed him and he died there.

Gha yen ti'iltse'di 'el dek'aa' nildaagga kexaninilt'ak.
When he had run out, he had tossed his gun against the door.

Gaann ts'akae, Kots'iic u'aat, danooxu c'ezes ggan zdlaay t'aghaltlet ts'en'.
The woman, Kots'iic's wife, jumped in back under a pile of dry skins and

yii t'aax ta stacnel'iinn 'el ts'ilghan du' daniyaa ts'en'.
as she hid under there, one man came in there and

ye c'ezes gge' ilcuudi 'el yen ts'akae ut'aa.
lifted up the skins and found the woman under there.

Dae' sael duu ghilcaaxi c'enk'onn' uyii nezdlaayi yii ile' diinlen.
She gave him a big box with dentalia beads inside it.

⁴ The Tutchone were then still trading with the Chilkat Tlingit of the Kluckwan area, meeting mainly at Neskatah-m (near Dalton Post) on the upper Alsek River. This trade is summarized in de Laguna 1972:350 and McClellan 1975:502-510. A detailed map drawn by the Chilkat Chief Koh-klux in 1869 indicates a trail up the Alsek River to Kluane Lake, the White River, and the upper Yukon (Davidson 1901, de Laguna 1972:88).

Yii kaen' ye kughikaet ts'en'.
She paid them with that.

"Sa nahwghulnic son'o," yelnii.
"Don't tell on me," she told him.

Yii ile' diñnen.
She gave him that (box of beads).

Yii 'uzniigi.
He took it.

K'a' nildaagga kexanetaan yii yaen' 'uzniic.
The only (other) thing he took was that gun leaning against the door.

'Utgge ta, "Nuhta nats'idaetl!"
Up above, "Some people are coming back to you!" (someone said).

Gha yen denae unaegge' k'es kolen staniyaann.
The man with one eye missing who had gone away.

"Nuhta nats'idaetl!" 'el 'utggu xuts'en' yezel.
"Some people are coming back to you!" he hollered to them from up above.⁵

Yehwna k'a all nasihteldaetl.
In the meantime all of them (the Upper Tanana people) ran back out of fear.

Xu'a "Nuhta nats'idaetl!" xu'ekenii ts'en'.
He kept on saying, "Some people have come back to you!"

Koht'aenn 'iinn nats'e'aas t'aenn netana'idaetl kiinizen ts'en' nahtesdaetl.
Thinking that the other people were returning to them, they started back.

'Unaa men kanacehwilnen ts'en' men k'enaann 'el stanakidaetl ts'en'.
They marched across the lake and they left crossing the lake.

xu'a nilk'enankidaetl ts'en'.
following one after the other.

Nahtesdaetl ts'en' 'alden ninkidaedl 'el xona nanilhdatiil.
They started back and they met together and then they counted each other.

Ts'ilghan denae natkoye xuta kole.
The one man who had vomited was missing from the group.

Gha yen bungghae yen xu'el natedaas.
That man's older brother was going with them.

K'a' 'el c'enk'onn' 'el yen denae ts'en' teldaetl.
The gun and beads were given to that man.

⁵ He bluffed them by saying that the other members of the band were just then returning.

Yii xuk'etl'aat, ye snakaey 'iinn gaa naxu ts'aal yii delts'iinn 'iinn du', ts'aalta xu'el nilkehdaldel ts'en'.

When they (Upper Tanana) had left, they had overturned the cradles that still had babies in them.

Yen ts'akae stacnel'iin.

That woman (who had been hiding under skins) sneaked out.

Yen gge' nahtesdaedl 'el ts'en' 'utggu snakaey 'iinn ta natedaas.

When they (Upper Tanana) left, she went back among the babies.

Yen daagga' 'adii snakaey 'iinn nanedyaxi 'iinn nalyes ts'en'.

She rescued the newborn babies.

Ts'aal xu'el nilkedeldaetl ts'en' nilkenaxucdelae ts'en' c'eldaan' 'iinn yaen' ghilaak.

She righted the overturned cradles and only a few of them (the babies) died.

Yii xutah yii c'a xona Kots'ic kiizelghaen.

One of them (the people) that they killed was that Kots'ic.

Kaskae.

The chief.

Gaa du' hwts'en 'unae' ghadyesi 'iinn du'.

The ones from here (Upper Tanana) who went to war upriver,

tsetsaan', tsetsaan' k'a' c'edak'aedi takifaen.

they had used some copper, old copper arrowheads.

Yii kaen' xuxghighaan ts'en'.

This is what they killed them (their enemies) with.

"Yii gaa xona gaa duu k'enakutnaexi gha

"Someone, in order to make revenge,

'uniidze xuk'e nastudyiis," dae' kenii xu.

might come back downriver on the warpath," they said.

Tsetsaan' k'a' xu'el yadghaan.

They killed them with copper arrowheads.

Yii ta kanahghilaa ts'en' nakiyetset ts'en' k'a' nakiighighaan kiilnii.

They pulled them (arrowheads) back out (of their enemies' bodies) and they hammered them and remade the arrows, they say.

Gaa du' kii'el natudyiisi k'edyaaaggi

They would have fought again with those (arrows).⁶

xu' k'alii gaa duu k'alii nahtidele.

but they (Tuchone) never came back here.

⁶ The recycled copper arrowhead was a war implement with special power. Both the Ahtna and Upper Tanana had access to copper which was used in a variety of implements. In Ahtna, over 20 names for copper implements and 8 place names referring to copper have been recorded (Kari, forthcoming). There are three archaeological sites in the area that have yielded numerous copper artifacts (see Shinkwin 1979:25-27, 54-56, 86-87, 138-142, 153-154).

L'i k'enakitniile ts'en' xuk'a kekuzyaak.

They (Tutchone) did not take revenge and they were defeated.⁷

⁷ Katie John says that the war chief, Denaecdael, is mentioned in two later stories. One of these is about a time of starvation in the Scottie Creek area. The other is about his death on upper Ts'odzaay Na' (Drop Creek) in the Copper Lake area in about 1877. Note that Denaecdael was apparently not present when the soldiers (Serebrennikov's group) were killed at Slana in 1848.



Banzaneta Billy's house at C'caegge ('River Mouth', confluence of Tanada Creek and Copper River), 1937. Left to right: Jimmy Henry, Huston Sanford, Daisy Nickolai, Snall Charley, Jimmy Albert, Lucy Albert, Lou Frank, Banzaneta Billy Henry, Oscar Jimmy, Jessie Henry, Steve Frank, Alec John, Lena Charley (front), Irene John (middle), Agnes Nickolai, Katie Henry, Harry Frank, Laura Nickolai, Herman Gene, Shorty Frank. Photo courtesy of Walter Phillips.

The Wrangell Map of 1839

This map of Alaska was compiled by Rear Adm. Ferdinand von Wrangell, who was governor of Russian Alaska from 1830 to 1835. It was published in German in 1839 in Wrangell's report *Russian America, Statistical and Ethnographic Information*. At that time this was the most detailed map of the Copper ("Ahtna") and Susitna ("Suschitna") rivers.

Although there was a Russian trading post near Taral ("Kupfer Fort") near the mouth of the Chitina ("Tschetschitno") River, occupied by a single trader after 1820 or so, Russian familiarity with the Copper River has been a matter of speculation, especially because of the several reported incidents of Ahtna hostility toward the Russians. An analysis of the place names, streams, and trails on this map suggests that most of the features on the Susitna and Copper rivers were reported by Tanaina Athabaskans from Cook Inlet ("Sund Kenai"), and had not been surveyed formally by Russians (as had the coastal features). In fact, there is no record of any Russian travel up the Susitna River at all until Petr Malakhov's 1844 trip (for which there is no known map or report) to the Devil Canyon area (Teben'kov, in Russian American Company Records, 1847).

This is the earliest mapping of Batzulnetas village, shown here as "Nutatlkat," based on the Tanaina pronunciation of the place name, *Nutal Kai'*, and not the Ahtna, which is *Natael Caegge*. It appears that both the Susitna and Copper rivers, throughout the entire period of Russian occupation (until 1867), were still very much in the control of Tanaina and Ahtna bands. Trade in upper Cook Inlet and the Copper River was conducted through Tanaina and Ahtna middlemen, perhaps almost exclusively, and it was possibly these middlemen who supplied most of the information for the Susitna and Copper river areas on this map. The inland areas, of which there had still been no formal exploration by Russians, were likely mapped based on Native information.

The names of the northernmost village, "Titlokot" (Toklat), and the easternmost village, "Nutatlkat" (Batzulnetas), were reported to the mapmaker by a Tanaina speaker (not an Ahtna nor Russian speaker). There is also some suggestion that these Native traders were supplying the mapmaker with only selective information or with deliberate misinformation. The Yentna River, a major corridor through the Alaska Range, is missing entirely, and the trail leading from the Copper River to Athabaskan ("Kohlschanen") villages, passing near the summit of Mount Wrangell is almost a mirror-image of the actual trail around the base of Mounts Drum and Sanford. (See Andy Brown's description of this trail in chap. 21).



Residents of *Nataekle* (Batzulnetas) in December, 1919. Left to right: Lucy Albert (obscured), Annie Albert, Sergeant Albert, Mary Albert, Sanford Charley, *Nelggodi* (Sarah Sanford), Susie Sanford, Frank Sanford, Annie Sanford, Katie Sanford (now Katie John), Lena Sanford. Photo by A.M. Bailey, from National Archives.

Seldaedze' Tinn Stl'aa Caegge Ghadghaande When Soldiers Were Killed at Slana

Katie and Fred John

When a second party of Russians¹ (and creoles), led by Ruf Serebrennikov, was killed by the Upper Ahtna in 1848, the impact was felt throughout Russian America. Serebrennikov was himself a creole, being half or more "Aleut." He had completed training in navigation at St. Petersburg in Russia, and had been sent to the Copper River by the geographer Teben'kov to do mapping and to establish Russian trade between the Copper River and the Tanana and upper Yukon rivers. Since the British had just established a post of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Yukon in 1847, the competition for trade with the Natives of interior Alaska had intensified. These killings by the Upper Ahtna ended Russian attempts to gain access to the Interior. Afterwards, trade through the post at Taral declined, and the Ahtna obtained most of their trade goods through the post on Knik Arm in Cook Inlet. Ketz (1983:35-45) gives a thorough account of this period.

The historic record of the killing of the Serebrennikov party is extensive because the remains of Serebrennikov's journal and astronomical readings were brought to Nuchek in July of 1848 by an Ahtna named Teinatkhel. This journal was edited by Teben'kov (Russian American Company Records, 1848-1849). Allen (1887:19-23), in his evaluation of the military threat presented by the Ahtna, translated and analyzed Serebrennikov's material. In addition, in July of 1848 and again in 1850, the Russian engineer Doroshin (n.d.:27-31, 36-37) interviewed Teinatkhel at Nuchek.

The group of perhaps five persons—Serebrennikov, another Russian, two other creoles, and an Eyak Indian—spent the winter of 1847-48 in Taral before continuing upriver in May of 1848. In late June at Chistlai-kaekak, "the first village of the Upper Ahtnas," a group of men were killed as they slept in tents (Doroshin, n.d.:28).

This account by the Johns is the first published full account of the incident at Slana. At the conclusion of the Johns' English account of the Batzulnetas incident, recorded by Strong (John and John, 1973), they state, "Another time some more Russians were killed down on the Slana. Everybody says the leader of that group was named McKinley. We know that story, too; there were two killings of the Russians up here. After that the Russians never came up this far." A synopsis of the Slana incident is in Strong 1972: chap. 5, pp. 12-13. The John's story corresponds quite closely to Teinatkhel's report, which was summarized by Doroshin (n.d.). In contrast to the earlier incident at Batzulnetas (chap. 10), the Johns do not claim that the non-Ahtnas at Slana provoked the attack by mistreating the local people. On the contrary, there was debate among the chiefs about whether to kill them. Significantly, the instigator is Takol'iix Ta', then chief of Mentasta, who is said to be the son of an Ahtna woman and one of the Russian members of the ill-fated party at Batzulnetas. It seems that the territorial Upper Ahtnas did not want Russian intrusion into their country, and this, combined with fear of reprisal for the earlier killings, led them to attack in 1848.

¹ The first incident involved the Samoilov party, during 1794-1795. See chap. 10.

Katie John (KJ):

'Udaadze 'udaat Taghaelgha keniide,
From downriver, downriver at the place called 'Dike in Water' (Taral),

yihwts'en xudaadze seldaedze' 'iinn ghadel.
from there some soldiers were coming upriver.

'Udaadze kadel ts'en', 'udaadze koht'aenn 'iinn tah gha kadel ts'en'.
Coming from downriver, they were going among the downriver Ahtna.

Koht'aenn gheli k'a kilaen ts'en'.
They (the soldiers) were good people.

Ts'ilghan 'udaadze Taghaelgha ts'akae ts'ilghan 'uzniigen.
One person (among the soldiers) had taken an Ahtna woman from down at Taral.

Ts'akae u'el zdaa.
He had stayed with the woman.

Yen xu'el yihwts'en ye xu'el tezyaa.
He came along from there (Taral) with them.

Bae Ninaexi 'el xii'ecdi'a'.
He was called Bae Ninaexi.²

Fred John (FJ):

Yet su 'udaat yen xa kaskae ghile'.
Down there this (Bae Ninaexi) was a chief.

Yet su 'udaadze teyaas 'el de'aat k'alii ugheldze' k'a kayunilyaxa.
At the time he left from down there, he was not treating his wife very well.

U'aat i'el tidacdi'aan.
His wife made a song of bad medicine for him.³

'Engii dahwdighile' ts'akaey 'iinn.
Those women knew a forbidden (medicine) language.

Ye su xona i'el tidacdi'aan.
Thus she made a song which was bad for him.

² The group was non-Ahtna but is identified only by the Russian loanword *seldaedze* 'soldiers'. The ethnicity of the group must have had the Ahtnas puzzled. Bae Ninaexi is not identified as Russian or Aleut. He did not lead the party, and thus probably was not Seredrennikov. He was most likely one of the creoles, or possibly the Euk Indian.

His involvement with a Taral woman was not known at the time of the incident. Katie John says that this was learned later through the medicine song that was made in Taral about Bae Ninaexi. Katie comments:

Bae Ninaexi came from downriver with them. He was killed among them at 'Rear River Mouth'. The (Upper) Ahtnas did not know who he was. They heard this from 'Dike in Water' (Taral). There a woman was his wife, at Taral. From Taral they knew that he had gone upriver with the soldiers.

³ Katie John implies that this bad medicine song contributed to the group's fate.

(song)

'Unae' gaa tsaan' kaskae' naghudlaexi.
Upriver you should become the chief of excrement.

Xo xeyaa
 Ho-heyaa

Bae Ninaexi gaa mandeyaenn zaghuya' xu gaa.
May weapons here go into Bae Ninaexi's mouth.

(repeated three times)

KJ:

Yen xu'el ghayaal ts'en'.
He (Bae Ninaexi) went with them.

'Udaadze koht'aenn 'iinn delts'iinn 'iinn tah kadel ts'en'.
They went where the Ahtna were staying downriver.

Xa'a koht'aenn gheli k'a kilaen.
They were really nice people.

Koht'aenn gheli k'a kilaenn 'iinn kadel ts'en'.
Being fine people, they (soldiers) were going along.

Xona Sil'aa Caegge koht'aenn 'iinn gha nihnidaetl.
Then they came to the 'Rear River Mouth' (Slana) people.⁴

'El C'alnes Ta' 'iinn Bets'ulnii Ta' 'iinn 'el ta yet hdelts'ii.
*'El C'alnes Ta', 'Father of Wrapped in Cloth', and his family, and Bets'ulnii Ta',
 'Father of Someone Respects Him', and his family were staying there.⁵*

Yen 'iinn gha hnidaetl ts'en'.
They came to them.

Ka'ooxe ta tazes ninke'aaay t'aa hdelts'ii.
They (soldiers) were staying out in the open there in tents that they had pitched.

Yildu' ghaye kaskae kuyitseh xu seldaedze' nidaedl 'iinn
*Then that chief ('El C'alnes Ta') knew about the soldiers who had come to them
 previously.*

Nataelde koht'aenn ghighaann, yii xugha 'elnes ts'en'.
whom the Ahtnas had killed at 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulnetas).

⁴ This corresponds with the information obtained by Doroshin in 1848 (n.d. 28), that the Serebrennikov group reached Chistlai Karkak, "the (Slana) first village of the Goltzan tribe." This is probably Sil'aa Caegge, the first village in Upper Ahtna territory. Ketz (1983:38) speculates that this place is the mouth of the Chistochina River.

⁵ According to Doroshin's source (n.d. 29), the chief of this village was called Kitapilla, "a sick old man." His younger brother also was present. Possibly Kitapilla is a personal name no longer remembered. See the sequence of Slana-Batzulnetas chiefs in chap. 3.

Teimatkhel told Doroshin in 1850 that Kitapilla starved to death in 1850. The Johns (and others) note that both 'El C'alnes Ta' and Bets'ulnii Ta' died in the 1880s.

"Nggat Mendaesde ts'en' 'uhyaal!

"You go up to 'Shallows Lake Place' (Mentasta)!

Na'aa seldaedze' 'iinn hnidaedl' 'iinn kughaan'i!

They should kill those soldiers that came out there!

'Utggadze ts'ekudael," dae' xu'elnii ts'en'.

They should come down from up there," he told them.

Xuts'en' nidacdinilaa ngge Mendaesde ts'en'.

He sent word to them up at 'Shallows Lake Place'.

"Gha denae stef'a," yen 'ungge tezyaay 'el.

"The chief sent me," (said) the one who went up there.

"Natsiit seldaedze' 'iinn

"Down by the river, soldiers

koht'aenn Nataelde ghighaan 'iinn 'eldaan' 'iinn le'i c'a natsii nidaetl.

have come who may be of the same group that the Ahnias killed at 'Roasted Salmon Place'.

Yii gha 'utsiit denae, 'utsiidze zdaann 'utsiidze stef'a' nuhts'en'," dae' xu'elnii.

That is why the chief by the river, the one staying by the river, sent me up from there to you," he told them.

Mendaesde du' dae' c'udalne'e denae ghaye ghida'a.

At 'Shallows Lake Place' a very aggressive man was staying there.

U'aat 'iinn nelt'e'.

He had many wives.

Yen 'iinn k'a tseh seldaedze' 'iinn nidaetlde yen 'iinn ts'en' ni'ilaenn.

When the soldiers had first come (to Batzulnetas) he was fathered by (one of) them.⁶

Denae ghayet u'aat 'iinn denc'i 'iinn c'a u'aat 'iinn ghile' ts'en'

The chief had four wives, and

niltah niltacnginifyaan.

they were raising (children) from different clans.

Dae' ku'edi'a', yen 'iinn de du' c'udaghalne' ts'en'

He called them (his children) fierce, aggressive, and

niltahnedyaan ts'en', t'ae' c'ekudelnii xu t'ehghit'e'.

being of mixed clans, they were indeed very fierce.

Yii gha 'aann xu'edetnii ts'en'.

This is why they ('Shallows Lake Place' people) were told to come.

⁶ Takol'ux Ta' is said to have had the nickname Unaegge' C'ilggeyi 'white eyes', because he had "blue" (i.e. not brown) eyes and cinnamon colored hair.

Yii gha 'utsii St'aa Caegge ts'en' all xu naghalt'aedze' hteздаetl.
This is why many of them went down to 'Rear River Mouth' (Slana).

'Utsii ye hnidaedl 'el du' ghaye kaskae gha dahnidaedl 'el
They arrived down there and they came in to that (Slana) chief there and (said)

"Na'oox seldaedze' 'iinn na'oox ninidaedl 'iinn,
"Out there, those soldiers that have stopped out there,

natsii Nataelde c'a sendan'a ta xu'eldaan' 'iinn duu lunidaedl de 'iinn.
are some of the group that came here some time ago to Batzulnetas.

Koht'aenn 'iinn gha'enhghif'aen'.
They have been punishing the Ahtnas.

Yen 'iinn 'eldaan' k'at'aenn 'iinn k'enats'unaex kiinizen ghale'i c'a duu hnidaedl.
It seems they are from that group and they have come here intending to take revenge.

Dae' xu' desnii gha nuhts'en' tiil'a'."
That is why I sent for you," (said 'El C'alnes Ta').

"Yedu' k'a koht'aenn gheli k'e s'el tkit'e' xu na'ooxo.
"Well, those people out there seem fine.

Koht'aenn gheli kilaenn k'e s'el tkit'e' ts'en' yae' nats'ehwtu'a'a.
Those people seem okay and you should forget about it.

Xuts'en' ts'ehwtu'a'," dae' kenii.
You should change your mind about them," they ('Shallows Lake Place' people) said.

Denae xu'etnii, yii Mendaesde kaskae' xugha c'ets'en' nitezet.
That man (Takol'iix Ta') told them that; then the Mentasta chief became angry at them.

"Yidi gha koht'aenn ghadghaan sdohnii xu suka hwtu'a' xu?
"How come you sent for me telling me to kill some people?

Gaa nuhgha nesyaay 'el nina'olguut xona 'ohdeyaagga 'el yae' nahwtuh'aann,"
I came here to you, and you have become afraid, and you have given up,"

dae' denae xu'etnii.
that chief told them.

Yii gha ldu' denae du' yak'a uyii nakadzet ts'en'.
Because of that man (Takol'iix Ta') he became really angry.

"Agha k'a duu gha xu' ts'ulaex," nii ts'en'.
"Okay, we should just do it now," he ('El C'alnes Ta') said.

Gaa xu cen'aay 'aann 'el xu de'iyuunn 'el ta na'ilcuut ts'en'.
He had an axe there and taking his spear

na'en xu'el kultlet ts'en'.
he hurried them out to get ready.

Xi'el tinidaetl.

They went out with him.

Ba'oo tazes 'aax hdelts'ii ts'en'.

Out there they (the soldiers) were sitting in a tent.

Tazes ta xu'el nankuhnezyets ts'en' cen'aay kaen' c'a xutanc'ekelkaal.

They tore the tent down on them and they chopped them with axes.

Ts'ilghan du' k'a' yii xugha na'ustniigi xu'uldiis.

One man (soldier) took a gun from them and shot at them (the Ahtnas).

Xu'uldiis k'alii xuzilghaele xuyae'.

He shot at them but did not kill any of them.²

Yehwna xiic'a' stanasi'ildaetl.

Meanwhile they (the Ahtnas) ran from them in fear.

K'ay' yii naghaltset.

He (with the gun) ran into the willows.

Naghaltset ts'en' 'udaa'a ta natesdeyaa.

He ran back and started back downriver.

All ts'en' ts'ilghan yaen' xuts'en kaghiyaa.

Of them all, only one man (of the soldiers) got away from them.

Xona natesdyay 'el du' nikilgiit ts'en' 'udaa' kiik'e hwte'la'.

When he went back they were afraid of him and they sent someone downriver after him.

"Udaa' koht'aenn 'iinn xu' dohniinn, ndaa koht'aenn taniyaa de'.

"You tell the Ahtnas downriver that wherever he comes among the people

xughansogh kenayudya' kiizulghael de' dae'.

that they should kill him before he passes by them.

Nek'eze nahwtalnic xa' 'unsogh ts'en' na'idyya de'.

He will tell on us if he returns back outside.

Nek'eze nahwtalnic xa'.

He will tell on us.

Kiizulghael de' "dae'.

They should kill him," (they said).

Utga cilkaey hteздаetl.

Some young men started off.

'Udaa' Chitina gha ts'ehwnicdelts'et yet ndaa hnul'aende kiizulghaeli gha.

The news came out down at Chitina that if they were to see him they should kill him.

² Doroshin's account corresponds (n.d., 29-30) closely. After four men were killed with spears or axes:

Pestriakov, wounded in the arm, grabbed the spear and, aiming along it, shot his pistol, tearing off the ear of one of the killers. That was enough to scatter them all. Not satisfied, Pestriakov came out of the tent and began to fire the rifles, forcing the Goltsam to hide in the forest.

'Udaa' 'el xona Chitina tah xona xona kenadidyaa koht'aenn tah.
Then finally down at Chitina he came among the Ahtna.

Gha yen yen yii tah xona kiizelghaen xuk'eze nayehwtalnigi gha.
That guy, they killed him there because he would have told on them.⁸

FJ:

Yeldu' xona kuxhighaan ts'ilghan sdeyesen yen ldu' k'a' na'ustniic ts'en'.
When they killed them, one guy escaped, taking a gun.

Xiini'ilgiit.
They were afraid of him.

Yehwna k'a gha yen sdeyesen du' naz'aay, tsetsaan' naz'aay 'el tatsadiyel ts'en'.
Meanwhile, that guy who escaped dumped a bucket, a copper bucket, into the water, and

xi'el ghatl'u'u 'el tatsaghiyel.
he also threw their clothing into the water.

Yet su xuc'a' xuc'a' nuu yinayadyaade kiik'e lunidaetl k'aliu ki'ehwdil'aale.
Then when he went back into the brush away from them they followed him but couldn't find him.

Yet denae 'udaa' xuts'en natesdyaay
When that man went downriver away from them

kaskae zizaghe dicaaxi zizaghe inelyaayi yii yits'en na'ustniic.
he also took the chief's (Serebrennikov's) gold necklace.

Natesdyaay xu naadaal ldu' tene li'i nasdaale ts'en'.
He started back and was returning (to Nuchek) but did not stay on the trail.

'Utgge kaekae yaen' naadaal.
He went back up along the hillsides.

Yet ndaata uts'ininidaeggi yekulyaak.
Somewhere it (the necklace) fell off and he lost it.

Dae' cu badahwde'estnes.
That is what I heard about it.

'Adii naxu soldier 'iinn du' k'ent'aede.
They seemed to be soldiers of that time.

⁸ Doroshin states that when he saw Tematkhel in the winter of 1850, he was told that Pestriakov had also been killed. Walter Charley says that Pestriakov was actually killed at the mouth of the Tazima River (personal communication).

Lazeni 'iinn k'alii hghilehe c'asu.
*They probably weren't Russians.*⁹

C'etsiy Itsogho ta gaa duu xu xuk'e k'eghila'.
They were wearing yellow metal (badges).

Yen kaskae 'alk'ek'a beyahwdit'aen kiinii.
That chief, they say, was quite visible.

Ye su k'adii naxu soldier 'iinn yen 'iinn st'luun k'ehghit'u' kiinii le'.
They say that they were dressed like the soldiers of that time.

'Alts'enne 'iinn ghile'.
There were five of them.

Denc'ii 'iinn ghadghaan.
Four of them were killed.

Yet cu ts'ilghan sdeyesen yen xuc'a' natesdyaa.
That one guy escaped and started back away from them.

Yet su c'ezaey' su xu' kon' kiltsiin xu' yet su c'ezaey' lu 'unse tkiilaak.
*They made a fire there for those corpses and then they cremated the corpses.*¹⁰

⁹ I interpret this to mean that most of the party were non-white.

¹⁰ There is no mention here of any personal effects of the party being taken downriver. Doroshin's informant, Tematkhel (n.d.:30), claimed that the Ahtna and Ugalentsi (Eyak) with the party were away cutting firewood when they heard the shots (and thus were not there during the battle). They retrieved the remaining equipment from the assailants, buried three bodies, and headed downriver.

In a Lower Ahtna version of this story, it is said Chief Basili of Taral was the guide for the party, and that he was responsible for delivering the papers to Nuchek (de Laguna and McClellan, n.d.). Lt. Henry Allen, who met the aged Chief Basili in 1885, said that he "presumably led the party of massacre against the Russians in 1848" (1887:127). Chief Jim McKinley's version (personal communication, 1984) focuses on the aftermath of the event in which Basili was brought out to either Kodiak or to Siberia, was given some Russian schooling, and returned to Copper River to make a series of prophecies about the impact that the outside world would have on the Ahtna people. Jim McKinley says that Basili was not actually present at the incident but that his son was.

The Johns deny that there were any Ahtna guides with this party. Fred and Katie do not recognize the name Tematkhel, belonging to the man who reported the incident to Doroshin at Nuchek in 1848. They also state that the Lower Ahtna chief Basili was not present at the incident.

Katherine Arndt (personal communication) notes that a Copper River chief was named in the Nuchek post records in 1852 and 1858 as Vasilii Tmatel'ta and Vasilii Tmat'let. She suggests that Doroshin's Tematkhel and Chief Basili may be the same person.

The Johns say that the leader of this party of soldiers has been known as "McKinley." They say that in the gold rush days miners would pass through the area and ask where McKinley was killed. In those days the Upper Ahtna were reluctant to tell this story. Katie wonders how the name McKinley became attached to this story.

Lieutenant Allen Nen'k'e Tezyaade When Lieutenant Allen Came into the Country

Katie John

In 1885 Lt. Henry T. Allen traveled up the Copper River and down the Tanana, Koyukuk, and Yukon rivers in less than 20 weeks, a journey of more than 1500 miles. These were the final years of the American Indian wars, and Allen's orders were to survey the population and conditions of the Indians of the interior of Alaska. His 1887 report, with its detailed ethnographic descriptions and maps, has long been regarded as one of the most important documents from the early period of U.S. exploration in Alaska. Sherwood, in his study of exploration in Alaska, called Allen's trip "the most spectacular individual achievement in the history of Alaskan inland exploration" (1965:118).

Allen was 26 years old in 1885. He later had a distinguished military career, which included commanding the 90th Division as a U.S. Army general during World War I. A biography of Allen, by Twichell (1974), has recently been published.

Allen and his two companions, Pvt. Fred Fickett and Sgt. Cady Robertson, arrived at Batzulnetas on June 2, 1885, and departed for Susloia on June 4. They were the first non-native people to cross one of the passes from the Copper River to the Tanana River. There is special drama attached to Allen's passage through this area because of the two earlier incidents in which Russians (or non-Ahtnas) were killed in this same part of Upper Ahtna territory (see chaps. 10 and 12).

This is the first published Native account of Allen's visit. Katie John related this story as it was told to her by Nelggodi, her mother. Allen's arrival, as seen through a young girl's eyes, is an interesting counterpoint to the lieutenant's own report. This was the first time Nelggodi had seen a white person, and she did not see another white person anywhere in the region until 12 or 13 years later (chap. 14).

In June, 1985, a potlatch and historical conference were held at the village of Mentasta, in recognition of the 100th anniversary of Allen's journey.

Tseh xona Lieutenant Allen bedi'a' duugh 'udaadze 'Atna' daadze kazyaa.
Some time before, the one called Lt. Allen came up here from down the Copper River.

'Atna' 'udaadze koht'aenn tagheyaal ts'en' koht'aenn 'iinn kii'el tedel.
He went among the Ahtnas as he came up the river and some Ahtnas went along with him.¹

Koht'aenn tah tene tah 'el ts'etniigi ts'en'.
He did not know the Ahtnas' trails.

Chitina hwt's'en 'el Chitina hwt'aenn 'iinn 'udaadze 'el tezdaetl.
From Chitina, he came upriver with some Chitina people.

¹ Allen's party left Tanal on May 4 with four Ahtna guides, including Chief Nicolai of Tanal. The two Lower Ahtnas that were still with Allen at Batzulnetas are called (by Allen) Wahine and Chetoza. Katie John does not recognize these personal names.

'Udaa' Ggax Kuna' gha hwk'e yen 'inn i'el nimidaetl ts'en'.
They went along with him as far downriver as 'Rabbit River' (Gakona).

Ggax Kuna' ts'en xona 'udaat kanahnidaetl ts'en'.
From 'Rabbit River' they (Chitina people) turned back downriver and

yii Ggax Kuna' hwt'aenn 'inn cu yihwts'en xona xu'el 'udaadze xu'el tezdaetl.
with some Gakona people they went on upriver from there.

Ye denae ughol' kughistle'e ts'en' tets kaen' yaen' luniyaa.
The (Gakona) chief had one leg missing and he walked around just with a cane.²

Yen xu'el gheyaal kiitnii.
They say he was walking along with them.

Yen xunayaal 'udaadze.
He led them from downriver.

Xona Nataelde xu'el kayizvaa.
Then he came up to 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batziulnetas) with them.

Ya'a xutsetah xutsilayizvaa ts'en', Nataelde xutayiniyaa.
Going on ahead of them, he (the man from Gakona) went among them (Ahtnas) at
'Roasted Salmon Place'.

"Nadaadze 'el seldaedze' 'inn nuhts'en' nuhts'en' ghadel."
"Some soldiers are coming to you from downriver."

Xutsehta hwnicini'aan.
He brought the news ahead of them (Allen's group).

"Seldaedze' 'inn nuhts'en' ghadel," dae' xu'elnii.
"Soldiers are coming to you," he told them.

Nataelde kaskae' Bets'ulnii Ta' bedi'a'.
The chief of 'Roasted Salmon Place' was called Bets'ulnii Ta', 'Father of Someone
Respects Him'.

"Sasluuggu'de ts'en' sa'ultle!
"You run to 'Small Salmon Place' (Suslota) for me!

² Allen (1887: 65-66) offers the following two descriptions of the crippled man from Gakona who joined the party on May 27 near Schmona ('Snuu Na', Sinona Creek) just below the Chistochina River:

the only native we saw was a cripple, who wanted permission to accompany us, claiming that he was a skilly, i-eule', a worker on a clan brother's and related to the Tuone of the Upper Copper. From him we learned that there was a trail over the Alaska Mountains, but it was kuteshit, kuteshit (i.e. kudeset, far away). He was willing however to go, but to subsist him would be necessary. We rejected his services and supposed that this would be the last of him — he continued to follow. After a while we found that he could be a valuable assistant, by digging roots, and he was added to the party. He proved a genuine skilly, in fact a Mascot, without whose services we would undoubtedly have suffered much more than we did.

On May 30 Allen writes:

The Tatlutan cripple took the trail, and we followed. . . . Our guide was crippled to the extent of having a shriveled leg, for which he substituted a long stick that passed behind the shoulder and above the head when adjusted to assist walking. . . . his speed and endurance seemed wonderful.

'Utgga yet kaskae zdaann 'utggadze gaat negha ghuya'a," dae' nii.
That chief who is staying up there should come down to us," he said.

"Ye kaskae 'el ts'ilden k'a neghulnaexi gaa," dae' nii ts'en'.
"That chief should be here in case something should happen to us," he said.

'Utgge ta ciil 'utgge Sasluuggu' ts'en' teltset.
A young man ran up to 'Small Salmon' (Suslota).

'Utgge ta yen tezyaa.
He went up there.

Xona dadaat c'edi'a'a 'el xona Lt. Allen ghayaal.
Then, just as the sun was setting, Lt. Allen was walking along.¹

Sii snaan ghile'.
My mother was there.

Yedan'a kedaltiy dit'e'.
She was already full grown.

Yen unaghal Lt. Allen xu luniyaa.
Lt. Allen came before her.²

"Unse Tes K'et snakaey ts'ilaen ts'en', 'unse Tes K'et ts'edelghos," dae' nii.
"Out at 'On the Hill' (hill near Batzulnetas) we children, we were playing out at
'On the Hill'," she (my mother) said.

"Udaat nek'et'aa ts'en' teldes.
"Downriver from where our home was (we heard) a shot.

Nadaat seldaedze' ghadel ghale'e tkonii.
It seemed that the soldiers were walking downriver there.

'Udaat naggaan'stelyaa.
We started running downriver.

Kadaat C'ecenn'gha yetah koht'aenn 'iinn kaek'ae kughile'.
The people's village was downriver at 'By the Stumps' (below Batzulnetas).

¹ Allen (1887:67) wrote this description of his arrival at the place he named after its chief's name, Batzulnetas.
The cripple had gone in advance to notify Batzulnetas, for such was the name of the chieftain, of our approach. The usual salute with guns was exchanged, and we were met by thirty-one men, ten women, and fifteen children. . . . Here there was but one winter house, and that occupied by the Tyone and his immediate following, while the other natives were living in spruce bough houses. Batzulnetas, the largest native seen by us in the Territory, was 6 feet 4 inches high, and clad in a blouse of scarlet flannel . . . and a pair of native trousers, which included the foot gear. His shirt of cotton cloth, and a black woolen hat with strips of red flannel, completed the costume. His hair hung down his back in a tangled roll 3 feet long, showing no signs of ever having had any attention. As a medicine man, he could neither have it cut nor combed. Over each ear hung two small braids, secured at the ends by beads and sinew. . . . his face showed neither courage nor cunning.

² Katie John's mother, Sarah, or Nelggodi, a name referring to headwork, was born about 1875 and died in 1938. She is quoted in the next passage.

'Udaat yet ts'en' nats'adeh 'el utse' nandeltsogho 'iinn ta 'udo natedel.
As we got back there, people with red hair were walking down below.

Ketseh koht'aenn 'iinn xunt'aenn 'iinn li'i ts'enifaen' ts'en' utse' deltsogho 'iinn
We had never seen people like that before, and it was said that the people with red hair

lan'a 'el netesdghaan ghale'e tkot'aenn dae' konii snakaey 'iinn."
might try to kill us children."

Snaan 'udii u'el yadaxa 'iinn all u'el natedel.
My mother and all the others (kids) her age walked with her.

"S'el natedel," nii.
"They walked with me," she (my mother) said.

"Ba'ooxe k'ay'ta ninasctnel'in ts'en' ye hwts'en' xuts'en' naex sdehts'ii," nii.
"We sneaked out among the willows, and from there we sat watching them," she said.

"Xona kaskae xona igge' dakidaetl.
"Then they went into the chief's house.

Nitsiil 'uygge dahnidaetl.
They went down into the house.

Xona gha'aa xugha'aa niscetnel'in ts'en'
Then we sneaked out there away from them and

hwnu' hwnu' kankusdaan igge tah xu'uka ts'ehwnaf'aen kutah.
we looked at them down through holes (in the walls).

Yen kaskae xugha kenas.
The chief spoke to them.

'Koht'aenn 'iinn ugheli.
These people are good.

Ugheli kilaen k'etkit'ae.
It seems that they are all right.

Ugheli kilaen k'etkit'ae xa', nansogho ba' ba' xugha dannolyaey
Since they seem all right, bring in some dry fish from out there

yi xugha 'olyaan,' dae' de'aat 'iinn 'elnii.
and feed it to them," he told his wives.

U'aat 'iinn ba' xugha dankilyaa ts'en'
His wives brought in some dry fish to them and

ba' 'el xugha xut'aa nihnilaa ts'en' xuyta kiiyaan."
they left the dry fish before them and they ate it among them."

³ Katie John notes that this was the previous summer's dry fish and that the summer salmon run had not started yet.

Yet xona Sasluugu' ts'en' ts'en kaskae 'utggadze ghayaal.
At that time the chief from 'Small Salmon' (Suslota) was walking down from there.⁶

Ungguta kediya.
He came out into the uplands.

Nt'ii snaan dii unaan yen ba'aa ts'en natedaasi 'el
Well, my mother was walking outside with her mother and

"Nt'ii koht'aenn 'iinn da xona gaa dahnidaetl da xona?" dae' nii.
Well, did some people come in here?" he (the Suslota chief) said.

"Aen' hnidaetl," dae' yilnii.
"Yes, they arrived," she (Katie John's grandmother) told him.

"Koht'aenn ugheli kilaen k'etkit'ae," yilnii.
"They seem like good people," she told him.

"Yidi xona tsin'aen kadahwdadliil," dae' nii.
"We are very glad to hear that," he said.

Yet xona kaskae' 'utgga Bes Ce'e kaskae' xona xugha yen c'a xugha daniyaa.
Then that chief from up at 'Big Bank' (Suslota Creek village), went on inside to them.⁷

K'alii c'ehdists'agga 'udaadze xu'el yadeli 'iinn.
They could not understand the ones (the downriver Ahtnas) who had come upriver with them.

Yen 'iinn k'alii su'u xu' hwdists'agga ts'en'
They did not understand them well and

k'alii Nondlae hdists'agga, Nataelde hwt'aenn 'iinn.
they did not understand English, those 'Roasted Salmon Place' people.⁸

Nduude gaa yet xu'el inezyaal ts'en'
He camped here with them for a while, and

xona yet 'udaadze xu'el inidaedl 'iinn yihwts'en kanahnidaetl.
then the ones who had come up from downriver with them turned back.

Yii c'a naxu k'adii picture k'ekeghaan k'e.
At that time they had been taking pictures (with a camera).

Yen Lt. Allen xu' t'aen.
Lt. Allen was doing this.

⁶ This is the chief Ggaan' Ggets Ta' 'Father of Twisted Arm', mentioned in chap. 3.

⁷ The Suslota chief apparently had been down at the lower of the two villages. Old Suslota, 'Sasluugu' is on Suslota Lake. Bes Ce'e is a few miles down Suslota Creek from the lake.

⁸ Allen (1887:68) notes

The natives here differed not a great deal from those of Taral. Their language, however, was not readily intelligible to our Lower River natives, one of whom I used as an interpreter. In some cases their words are entirely different.

'Udaadze 'udaadze koht'aenn taghayaal ts'en' picture c'eghaan ts'en'
As he came upriver among the Ahtnas, he had been taking pictures, and

ghayet xona picture uyizdlaayi ye kanaghilaa ts'en'
he removed that picture (film) there, and

xona 'udaa'a koht'aenn u'el inidaedl 'iinn gha ninayinilaa.
then he sent it back downriver with the people he had arrived with.

"Gaa 'udaa' sana'ulyael.
"Take this back down for me.

'Udaat danalyaesde yet sa da'olaet de'," yet ku'elnii.
Take it for me to that place downriver (Valdez)," he told them.

Koht'aenn yedi'i t'el'aenn kiinizen ts'en' xii'el natesdaetl.
The Ahtnas wondered what was being done as they went back with it (the film).

'Udaat nakadel ts'en' k'a ghayii picture xiits'en ts'enkiyele' ts'en', all ts'en'.
As they went back downriver they removed that film (exposing it), all of it.

K'alii yii daagge' yii picture ubuge' k'alii c'ilehe.
This is why there are no pictures in his book.⁹

Yihwts'en xona nduuy nezyaal.
Then he (Lt. Allen) camped for a time.

Xona yihwts'en xona, "Ba'en xu txosya'a.
Then, "I should go over (to the Tanana side).

Koht'aenn s'el tudy'a'a," dae' nii.
An Ahtna should go with me," he said.

Yihwts'en xona snaan dii bez'ae yen xiigha da'udezniic.
Then they asked my mother's uncle about that.

Yen kii'el tel'a'.
They sent him with him (Allen).

Ba'en Tezdlen ts'en' 'en xu'en itnezyaa.
Over to 'Swift Current' (Tetlin) he led him (Allen) over the pass.

'Utga xona Sasluuggu' Sasluuggu' kedi'a' ts'en'
Up to the place called 'Small Salmon' (Suslota)

xuhta i'el tezyaa ts'en' xu'endze' ba'en S'aa Tl'aa
he went with him and over to the other side, to 'My Wife Headwaters' (upper Bear Creek)

⁹ Sullivan, in the foreword to the 1985 Alaska Journal reprint of Allen's journal, says
Ficket and Allen also shared a pride in the fact that they would be the first photographers in most
of the territory they would be covering. It was a blow to both men when the glass 4x5 negatives
they made on the expedition were mysteriously lost after being sent out by messenger.

'en xu'en i'el ghaniyaa ts'en'.
he went through the pass with him.

Ba'aa S'aa Na' yet xii'el k'eghiyaa ts'en'
They (Allen's party) came out with him over at 'My Wife Creek' (Bear Creek) and

'unaat Tetlin S'aa Na' kedilende yet xii'el tsidiyaa.
*they came out with him down across from Tetlin, where 'My Wife Creek' flows
 (to Tetlin Lake).*

Xu'el keydiyaade
He (the guide) arrived with them

yihwts'en xona 'unaat koht'aenn hdelts'iide tah Nalk'edzi xu'el niyaa.
*across there where the (Last Tetlin) people were staying at
 'Nalk'edzi' (Last Tetlin).*

Gha yet hwts'en xona xu'el xuc'a' naytesdyaa.
There he left them (Allen's party) with them (the Last Tetlin people).

Xu'en kadelde c'aan 'aede xu'el kekughitsaasi.
When they went over there they (Allen's party) had a hard time being without food.

Uc'aann' kulaele ts'en' Nalk'edzi hnidaedl 'el yen xu'el yayaalen du'
He had no food and they arrived at 'Nalk'edzi' and the guide (said),

"Xu'el c'aan 'aede 'el xu'el kekutsaasi 'iinn sunt'ae.
"They are having difficulty being without food.

Ugheldze' xuk'a nolta'.
You take good care of them.

Koht'aenn ugheli kilaen 'iinn sunt'ae," dae' ku'edine' ts'en'.
They are good people," thus he told them.

Xuc'a' natesdyaa.
He left them.

Gha yehwts'en xona Hwdisaade ts'en' luhnidaetl.
From there, then they went to 'Distant Place' (Mansfield).

Gha ye hwnes, hwnes keltsiinn kaen' nilc'anakitkaen ts'en'
There they set out in a raft that they made and

yihwts'en du' k'alii koht'aenn 'iinn k'alii xu'el tiyaale.
from there on, no other Indians went with them.

Daa' Fairbanks ts'en' daa' ta kenahdidekaen.
They paddled downriver toward Fairbanks.



Fred John speaks at a 1985 conference commemorating the 100th anniversary of Lt. Allen's journey through Upper Ahtna territory. Photo by James Kari.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Tseh Nondlae Nen' Kakezdaetlde When White People First Came into the Country

Katie John

The mining industry had great impact on eastern Alaska and the Yukon Territory after the mid-1890s. The first gold discovered on the upper Chistochina River was found by a Mentasta man named Wadets (Fred John's uncle, Charley), who guided some prospectors to the area called Dempsey near Slate Creek perhaps as early as 1895.¹ In 1898 thousands of miners entered the Copper River and the Klondike areas. The first miners on the upper Nabesna and upper Chisana rivers arrived that same year. In 1910 the Orange Hill Mine in Nabesna was staked, and the Chisana stampede occurred in 1913. Ahtna and Upper Tanana participation in mining (including market hunting) is well documented in Reckord 1983. The early mining history of this area is described in Mendenhall and Schrader (1903). Ahtna accounts of the gold discoveries at Slate Creek, Nabesna, and Chisana emphasize that Native knowledge of the country, the minerals, and the game played an essential role in the mining industry.

During the ten years between Lt. Allen's expedition and the onset of the gold rush, very few white people are known to have traveled through the upper Copper River. In the winter of 1897-98 there still were Natives in this area who had never seen whites. In May, circa 1897, Katie John's mother saw white people for the second time.

Snaan s'el nakalniisi yii gha 'adiit nahwgholnigi.
Now I'll tell (you) as my mother used to tell me.

Lt. Allen xutaniyaade yen tseh Nondlae² c'a hni'aen'.
The first time they had seen white people was when Lt. Allen came among them.

Yik'ets'en 'el c'a xona Nondlae nana'aen'i
Afterwards white people were next seen

'unae' Nin' Hwt'aenn nenn' tah xu nahtenaesi 'el
upriver when they (KJ's mother's people) were traveling in the country of the 'Land People'
(Upper Tanana or Tutchone of the upper White River), and

c'a Nondlae tseh kahghidaetl.
white people came up there for the first time.³

Yet c'a Nondlae nana'aen' yii gha nahwgholnigi.
I tell about when the white people were seen again there.

¹ This is confirmed by Powell (1909:5-6) who interviewed I.N. West, a white prospector who was on the Chistochina River in about 1895. West said, "Now let me tell you something about the discovery. The Indian found the first nugget, which he picked up with his hand."

² The Upper Ahtna word for white people, Nondlae, is a loanword from one of the Athabaskan languages to the north, probably Upper Tanana or Kutchin. Jack John Justin translates this word 'people who always come and go'.

³ These were prospectors who entered the upper White River through Chitstone Pass via the Chitina River.

Datsiit Mendaes Hwt'aenn 'iinn Natael Hwt'aenn

The 'Shallows Lake People' and the 'Roasted Salmon People' from down below

'unae' nen'tah hteznai 'uniit Nadzax Na' keniide.

had moved upriver into the country at 'Nadzax River' (White River).

Xuhtah K'ehghinaa ts'en' xuhtah deniigi gha xeyde htezdaetl.

They came among them (the White River people) and they went (hunting) for moose in the winter.

Key niidze htezdaetl ts'en' Mendaes Hwt'aenn 'el lukakesdaetl ts'en'

They left in mid-winter and met up with the 'Shallows Lake People' and

'unooxo xuhtah yii gha nen'tah nahtedel debet det 'uka.

they traveled there among them to fill their empty stomachs.

Yet xu deniigi,

There, for moose,

Men Daesde kaskae' udatne'i C'etiy Ghodi bedi'aan, yen c'a xuh natanaes.

that chief of 'Shallows Lake Place' (Mentasta), called C'etiy Ghodi, 'Bent Old Man' (Fred John's father), went (hunting for moose).

Deniigi xugha ghighaan.

He killed some moose for them.

Yii kaen' xuhtah hdaghalts'e'i.

They stayed among them living on that.

Xona xu'el kulggon ts'en' yet Nadzax Na' ts'en ts'iniidze dae' nanaelhteldaetl.

Then when it became spring they started moving back directly down from 'Nadzax River'.

Tsabaey Na'aay Nen 'uniidze dae' nakatnaeli 'el

They were coming back down in 'Trout Month' (May) and

tes tah tene nankuz'aa tagga' nakatdeli 'el

they were following the trails winding among hills and

tes k'et kanakesdaedl 'el 'unayggat kaekae ts'en' lggey tazes nighi'a'.

they came up onto a hill and below on a hillside stood a white tent.

Lggeyi tazes k'a 'el ts'ekatniigi.

They did not know about canvas tents.

Yedan'a tazes li'i c'ilaele.

Previously, there was no canvas.

Tazes lggey 'unayggat nighi'aay xiits'en' ts'enidaetl.

They went out toward that tent down below.

Xuk'a xiits'en' ghadeh 'el Nondlae xut'aay tiniyaa tazes t'aax ts'en.

As they approached, a white man came out from the tent to meet them.

Utse' Itsogh xunt'aey.
His hair was red.

C'eldaan' 'iinn snaan 'iinn du' u'el naytedel 'iinn du' Nondlae tseh hni'aen'i.
This was the first time that some of the people traveling with my mother had seen white people.

"Yits'en' denae nts'e nt'aen c'a naggedzi zes, delk'ali zes tsic'uus t'aen k'ent'aey utse' xu ltsiinn nets'en' tiniyaay," kenii.
"It looks like that man who came out to us has a red fox skin hat," they said.

"Xuk'a banits'udael," kenii ts'en' kadet.
"Let's stop by him," they said and went on.

Xiits'en' ghadeli kiigha niinidaetl.
They went to him and stopped by him.

Xuts'en' ikenaes.
He spoke to them.

K'ali kiidists'agga.
They did not understand him.

Kaydii c'a xiits'en' hnedelghos.
They also spoke to him.

K'ali c'a xudists'agga.
He did not understand them either.

Tazes t'aa zdaa ts'en' 'el kedezdlaa ts'en'.
Where he stayed in the tent there were spruce boughs.

Xu 'el laggadi 'alden dela' kaen' ninizogh.
He gathered together some spruce needles in his hand.

Xugha nic'aay i'el la'it'aan ts'en' naydett'iit.
He lifted his hand with them (needles) toward them and then dropped them.

Dae' c'a koht'aenn Nondlae 'iinn xuh xugha nats'utetses ts'en'.
Then he pointed to them, to the (approaching) white people.

Nondlae 'iinn dae' c'a xugha nen'k'e dyaagga dae' xu'elnii.
Thus he told them that the white people were appearing in the country.

Xiik'enic'idaek xu'elnii ts'en'.
They understood what he told them.

"Nondlae sk'ehnt'aenn 'iinn," dae' nii.
"White people like me," he said.

Yii gha dets'u'utsaes.
Thus he pointed to himself.

Yii c'a nlihdetnii.

They spoke among themselves.

"Dii uk'e dyit'aenn 'iinn nen' kazdaedl 'iinn le'e c'a xu' ne'etnii," xiitnii.
"It looks like he is telling us that people like himself have come up to the country,"
they said.

Xu' k'alii kiidists'agga dela' daagga' xugha nalaytet'aasi daagga' xiik'e nic'edax.
They could not understand him but due to his hand motions they figured this out.

C'a kaydii c'a xiigha nalatet'aas.
They made motions to him also.

Yet kayggu nen'k'et dezolts'ii xugha koltsii ts'en'.
He motioned to them to sit there on the ground.

'Uygggu nen'k'e nitt'ahdelts'ii.
They plunked down on the ground.

Tazes t'aa dan'idyya ts'en'.
He went back into the tent.

Naxu c'aan zes lggeyi yii xugha tinilaa.
He brought out some flour sacks.

Xut'aa nikunilaa.
He put them beneath them.

C'aan nanest'aey n'et xut'aa nikunilaa ts'en' xu'ec'ityaan'.
He put bread before them and fed them.

Gha yihwts'en Lt. Allen k'ets'en xona Nondlae nanal'aen'i snaan.
That was when my mother saw a white person again after Lt. Allen.

Yihwts'en xona 'uniidze nahtesnaa.
Then they started back downriver.

Xona cu Nondlae 'iinn tah nakidaetl.
Then they came back among more white people.

Yet xona Nondlae 'iinn nen'k'e htezdaetlde.
That was when the white people started entering the country.

Cu ka'aat kedel ts'en' Nondlae gha kedel.
As others (white people) came along, they came to them.

15

Nanset Tanuu K'et Ketninit's'iide Out on a Windswept Island

Fred John

This autobiographical story about the period between 1915 and 1941 demonstrates Fred John's skills as a chief and an orator. He emphasizes the ancient values of the Athabaskan hunting religion: the importance of generosity, luck, and prophecy, and the curative powers of song and advice. He shows that language itself is medicine.

Sc'aen ghale' dan'a sta' sta' nec'a' yae' telts'et.
When I was a child my father, my father passed away from us.¹

Nahwgholnigi sii k'enesdzetde.
Let me tell about when I was raised.

Sta' yae' telts'et ts'en'
My father passed away and

gaa Mendaesde udzih, udzih xona men 'ediyaa sta' xu' 'edine.
he had said that here at 'Shallotes Lake Place' (Mentasta) a caribou would go into the lake.

Sta' ghadeyiin' ts'en'.
My father had made medicine (and predicted this).

Yet cu staaay 'iinn na'aat Hwdisaade ts'en' ba'aadze teshghidaatl' 'iinn.
My uncle's family came back over the pass from 'Distant Place' (Manstfield).

"'Ene', snakaey 'iinn gha c'ehwdadaxa."
"No, it is going to be difficult for the children," (my mother said).

'Ene', ne'el naghidaal, "snaan 'ekenii.
No, (leave that place and) come back with us," they told my mother.

Snaan xu'el natesdyaa.
My mother went back with them.

Yihwts'en ba'ooxo Hwdisaade 'alts'eni xey Hwdisaade sdaghalts'e.
After that, over at 'Distant Place', we stayed five years at 'Distant Place'.

Yet ta k'enesdzet.
I grew up there.

Yet su xona snaan, "'Ene, gaa duu c'etiy negha kekutsaas.
Then finally my mother said, "No, this place is too hard for us.

¹ Fred John's father was Chief John, or Menac'ulnus Ta' 'Father of Another One is Born'. He died in 1915.

Niduuy gha dghostl'u'u.
I should try to snare a lynx.

Ba'ooxo snakaey gha niduuy dghostl'u'u."
Over there (at Mentasta) I should snare a lynx for the children."

"Udzih 'el yidaaghe ta kulaen," kenii.
"And there are caribou there," they said.

"Udzih gha dacdghostl'u'," snaan nii ts'en'.
"I should set a snare for caribou," my mother said.

Snaan gaa duu tesnaneghilaa.
Mother brought us back (to Mentasta) over the pass.

Gaa duu ta xona snaan xona denenn' kanesdyaa ts'en' xona ggaal 'el t'aen.
My mother came back to her own country and then she set snares and traps.

Tsabaey 'el luk'ae 'el negha ninayelcet snaan.
She put up trout and salmon for us.

K'enenildaek.
She raised us.

Snaan du' ciil 'iinn k'edghat'aen'.
My mother did what the men did.

K'a' 'el teldes ts'en'.
She shot a gun.

Sos ghighaan ts'en', snaan.
And she killed bears, my mother.²

Xeyde 'uka ninac'elcet ts'en' snakaey ggaay ts'ilaen.
In winter she put up food and we were small children.

'Alts'eni yaen' xey ghale' sta' yae' telts'etde.
I was just five years old when my father died.

Yet xona xeyde xona snaan udzih gha c'etl'uus.
Then, there during the winter, mother set snares for caribou.

Xutah udzih tal'as ts'en' yii udzih luun'.
Caribou would come into the area and she would snare caribou.

Yii snaan yii kaen' gha snaan nenelyaan.
Mother raised us on that.

Snaan du' 'ael ta ghila'.
Mother also set traps.

² Fred John's mother, Maggie John, or Sakulnaa, died in 1936 when she was about 60.

C'aan ggaay ta negha 'ughiket.
She would buy us a few groceries.

Yet du' nexon nekonagh' xughistle'e ts'en'.
There wasn't much in our house.

Stlen Singolay kiidini'i yen konagh' ta k'ets'idaek.
We grew up at my brother-in-law's place, the one (brother-in-law) called Single-Eye.

Yet xona nen' tastedel ts'en' xona stlen Singolay yen 'el ut'asdilt'aex ts'en'.
Then we would go out in the country and we would help my brother-in-law, Single-Eye.

Yii daaghe' udzih gha nele' ltaes ts'en' cu debae gha nets'en' telt'ax.
In exchange, he would give us caribou, or he would drop off a sheep for us.

Yii snaan yilggiinn.
Mother would dry that.

Du' nuunn 'el xuyxey 'el tseles 'el yii gha ghetnaax.
And she would work on porcupine, marmot, and ground squirrel.

Nen'ta yilggiinn ts'en' yik'ets'en gigi ta n'el yidi c'a nen' lduul',
She dried them out in the country and afterwards, the various berries and small land plants.

nen'k'e ts'eyaann, snaan negha lecenvelaes.
food from the land, Mother gathered for us.

Luk'eghe', tsabaey ghe', sos yii c'a zelghaesta yii c'a c'ighe' lciis ts'en'.
She would render grease—salmon grease, trout grease, and bear grease—whenever one was killed.

Yii k'uun' nahwluude k'uun' yii c'a k'ey ts'aac yii snaan ineltiin ts'en'.
Mother would freeze that salmon roe in a birch container in the fall.

Xona nen'ta stedel ts'en' negha kehwhitsaas,
Then when we went out into the country it was hard for us,

sdaedze sunghae.
for my younger sister and my older brother.¹

Sunghae du' t'ae' ts'ehwnaghaldiin'en.
My older brother was somewhat incompetent.

Tsets yaen' ulak'ae dighita'.
He was good only at handling wood.

Netsedze' k'alii negha kulael.
We were never out of wood.

¹ Fred's younger sister, Mary John, had the Ahlta name Naen' T'ar'a. 'Flat Moss'. She died in 1939. Fred's older brother, Allgiu John, known as C'ekunn, died in 1947.

Yii cu tsets sunghae tsets datnes ts'en'.
My older brother knew that wood.

U'inn'k'e tsets dadgha'.
He liked wood (gathering).

Tsets yii gha yaen' maen ghile'.
He was a man good only for wood.

Yet su c'a saade snaan dagge' denenilniic.
So my mother was barely able to provide for us.

Ts'ilden k'a xey ne'el naghatsiitl.
One winter it snowed a lot on us.

Detsen kuynidziista tsabaey gha cu kustlaeghe.
Hunger was approaching, since there were no trout.

Gigi c'a kustlaeghe.
There were no berries, either.

Xu' tkudyaak.
It happened like that.

Sditsigi sdaedze' 'el sunghae yaen' little bit kedelt'ae.
We were small and my younger sister and older brother were only a little bit self-supporting.

Yet su 'u'en 'u'en k'adii Tok Junction ts'en' 'en koniide xu'e Ts'etiy Na' xu
Then, over at what is now called Tok Junction, over at 'Strong River' (Tok River)

yes kats'ezdaetl.
we went on the snow crust.

Tae' yaen' k'a c'ekol yidi c'a luk'ae ba' deyaen'.
There was hardly anything but some dry fish.

Ba'aat 'adii Little Tok keniide ba'aat C'ede' Daz'aan Na'
Out at what is now called Little Tok (River), out at 'Horn Is There Creek'
(Log Cabin Creek)

gha yet yaen' k'a ts'edaax.
we were staying just like that.

Nelic'ae' c'a all k'ent'ae ts'en' tahmidaek ts'en'.
Our dogs all looked like they were starving.

Yi sbets'e' sta' utsuuy, yen ts'akae, Ggaay John unaan,
My aunt (Jessie John), my father's grandchild, that woman who is Little John's mother,⁴

⁴ Fred refers to Jessie John as 'my father's grandchild', although she is actually his father's sister. This is some sort of a kinship joke.

gha yen su ggaay neghal'aen ts'en'.
she was close to us.

Yidi'i ggaay yizdlaa yii kaen' nse' ne'edalgol.
With whatever little there was she would provide for us.

Nec'a' nahtesdaetl.
They (FJ's mother and aunt) left us.

Snaan du' lic'ae tanidaeggi bes yii xughilaa.
Mother put the starving dogs on a toboggan.

Xona bes yinaneghilaa.
Then she put us on the toboggan.

Ba'aadze xuk'e nisnedeli 'el sbets'e' c'uka natesdyaa.
We camped out that way and my aunt went hunting for something.

Deniigi zelghaenn 'el Men Tac'iltende.
A moose was killed at 'Game Trails Go Among Lakes' (Mineral Lake).

"Yet deniigi zelghaen," nii ts'en'.
"A moose was killed there," she said.

Gha yihwts'en' snaan sbets'e' xatl yimighildael 'el sbets'e' nane'ilyaa.
Then my mother and aunt loaded it into a sled and my aunt brought it back to us.

Gha yet tazes t'aax sdelts'ix.
We stayed there in a tent.

Tege c'aan 'aede.
It is tragic (to be) without food.

K'afak'e kekutsaas.
It was really difficult.

Yedu' yihwts'en' snaan tsa' zes dezdlaa.
Then my mother had some skins.

Ndedan'a ts'en idezdlaay tsa' zes ts'en'.
She had had the skins for some time.

Mendaesde natesdyaa.
She went back to 'Shallows Lake Place' (Mentasta).

Gha yet store kul'aen ts'en'.
There was a store there.⁵

Yet su snaan gha Mendaesde na'idvaa.
Mother returned there to 'Shallows Lake Place'.

⁵ The store was owned by Lawrence deWitt.

C'aan 'uzniigi kaen' ts'il dzaen k'a inalta' nilkedezyaa.
She went (to the store) and returned in one day getting the food.

Yihwts'en' negha na'ideyaa.
Then she came back to us.

C'aan ggaay 'uzniigi du' kon' ta kon' ta snaghalt'e'.
She got groceries but there were many of us around the fire.

Mendaes Hwt'aenn c'ile' dan'a.
In the past there were Mentasta people.⁶

Kon'ta ts'ilk'ey tutiil c'ilaenn xutayile'.
She passed one cup around the fire.

Dalnesi 'el c'aan ggaay 'el zaay xutah xutah kiitnilt'it.
Sugar and groceries and rice she poured out for them.

Sacaan 'el sunghae 'el snaan 'el staay 'el staxac'ehdelyaa.
In the morning my brother and my mother and my uncle went out hunting.

Staay du' t'ae' uc'a' hwdi'a' ts'en'.
My uncle was very unlucky.

K'a' ta 'el teldesita, "K'a' tidanldic," xu' nii ts'en'.
Whenever he shot a gun, he said, "I shot the gun the wrong way."

Yet c'a sunghae i'el tezyaa.
My older brother went with him.

Sunghae uk'aa' ugheldze' teldes.
My brother's gun shot accurately.

Yii staay teztaan ts'en', gaa uk'aa' du' sunghae.
My uncle took it, my brother's gun.

Yii si cu t'ae' c'aan 'aede tah.
There was no food at all.

K'adii k'a sdzaghe' dahwtnilehe ts'en'.
At that time I used to speak up a lot.

Sc'aen 'elaen ts'en' k'a sdzaghe' dahwtnilehe.
When I was a child I used to speak out of turn.⁷

⁶ Fred John often remarks that many of the families from Mentasta have no living descendants. Rice, who passed through Mentasta in July of 1899, made this comment about loss of life at Mentasta at the time of the gold rush:

We travelled along the ridge until we could see Lake Mentasta in the distance. After crossing the Slana and following an old Indian trail, we arrived at Mentasta Creek. Here we found several deserted Indian shacks. Forging this creek we continued along the trail until we reached Mentasta Lake which is located at Mentasta Pass. We learned that all but two of the Mentasta Indians had died the previous winter and that the two survivors had joined the Ketchumstock tribe (Rice 1899:785-86).

⁷ This humorous expression means literally, 'my ears did not exist'—that is, that Fred used to make lots of jokes.

Yeldu' xona sunghae dan'a b-a'adze kanghadyaa.
Then my brother had already come back from out there.

"Ti deniigi ghasghaan," nii.
"Well! I killed some moose," he said.

Negha dana'iltset.
He ran inside to us.

Tsaede dadghaan.
That was the first time he had killed his own game.

K'alii c'ezelghehe xona tsaede dadghaan.
He had never killed anything and this was the first time he killed game.

Deyaaaze nadaegge detsiige nadaegge, denc'ii deniigi zelghaan.
Two cows and two calves, four moose were killed.

Staay du' gaa sunghae k'aa' ugheldze' teldesi yii kaen' k'alii deniigi 'ildese.
My uncle could not shoot the moose (even) with my brother's gun that shot accurately.

"Yii cu yii cu deyen 'iinn daagga'," dae' dine'.
"This is because of the medicine people," he (my brother) said.

"Sts'en' ts'anits'at'aen' k'ent'ae," dae' nii.
"It seems that someone had put a hex on me," he said.

Yet su xona ses ciit nats'adaetl.
Then right there we restored our luck.

Snaan tege.
My poor mother.

Yihwts'en xona, yihwts'en xona, ugheldze' xona ts'edaghalts'e'.
Afterwards, afterwards, we lived well.

Xona fourteen s'el kuzdlaenn 'el snaan, dzuuggi sil'aen ts'en', snaan.
Then, when I was fourteen, my mother treated me as a favorite child, my mother.*

Sii tl'ataha 'elaen.
I was the youngest.

Ye su snaan ba'ooxo 'ael ta u'el txosya' ts'en', "Ene' n'el dliitdalzes xa'."
If I tried to go out to the trapline with mother, (she would say,) "No! You'll get cold!"

Xona snaan 'ael' niis'iin.
So I stole some of my mother's traps.

Nadaegge 'ael ggaay niis'iin.
I stole two little traps.

* Dzuuggi is the Ahtna term for a favorite child, a child who receives special instruction, especially in the oral tradition.

Nihbaay gha ni'aelnes'aan.

I set a trap for a weasel.

K'adii c'a su uyighi'aats k'e banidef'aax.

I set it so something might go into it.

Xuk'a uts'en' nanzelten.

I went back and forth to it.

Yita xona nihbaay xona nihbaay zel'ael.

Finally a weasel, finally I trapped a weasel.⁹

Yet si cu xona na'aat snaan staniyaa.

Just then my mother went out (hunting).

Xona nunyeggaay 'ool'ael 'uka stanesyaa.

Then I went out to trap fox.

U'el ts'estniige.

I didn't know how.

K'alii snaan 'ael' nefiil ts'en'.

I hadn't seen (how) my mother's traps (were set).

Xuta nunyeggaay gha nin'ael'ele'.

I set traps for fox here and there.

Yedu' xona xey nac'eghestna'.

I worked there all winter.

Taade xey 'ael'ghala'.

I had a trapline for three years.

'Ael'el ts'estniigi ts'en'.

And I didn't know how to trap.

Snaan du' "Ene'," silnii.

Mother told me, "Quit it."

"Nedliitdalzes xa'," silnii.

"You'll freeze," she told me.

"Snaan, sc'a' dazitsaande bedi'i c'a kedghalt'ael?

"Mother, when you die who will support me?"

Xuk'a da nk'etl'aatde k'alii c'a sictalyiilts'en' 'el estnes de'.

I know that after you (die) no one (else) will feed me.

Sii xa'k'a k'enic'eghaset.

I figured this out on my own.

⁹ Catching the white least weasel has special importance for the luck and success of the Athabaskan hunter. Fred John mentions this animal two more times in this story.

Snaan, sc'a' yae' telts'et de' nts'e hwgha hwtxastnes dida?
Mother, when you pass away from me, how will I survive?

Dae' ine'esen."
That's what I am considering."

Sii xa'k'a xona taagga nahwdezet xu 'ael ghala'.
On my own I had had a trapline for three years.

K'alii c'a c'el'ael.
I didn't catch anything.

Stlen, Nikolai John kiilniinn, snaan xu' yilnii,
My brother-in-law, the one called Nikolai John, Mother told him,

"Ntlaen ntlaen naxu 'ael 'el hnadetniisen xu ts'ehwnildene k'ent'ae.
"Your friend, your friend is failing at trapping and it looks like he doesn't know how to do it.

N'tiy c'a 'ael nle' gholael, c'aan ggaay nle' gholaelde.
Let me give you traps, let me give you groceries.

Ntlaen nanaann ba'en Dzel Tax 'en u'el lughiyaat.
Go around with your friend across and over at 'Mountain Pocket' (Indian Pass).

'Ael unaghat ni'ile."
Set the traps in his presence."

Yen ta s'el tezyaa.
He started out with me.

Yet 'ael ts'ezdlaa, nunyeggaay fael.
We had traps there and he caught a fox.

Ni'aelte'aasta sii nitiis'aan ts'en'.
Whenever he set a trap, I would set one.

Unanatsitestsii xona snaghal nin'aellie'.
I would peer over him as traps were set before me.

Yet su c'el'ael.
He caught something there.

Nunyeggaay fael.
He caught a fox.

Nunyeggaay fael.
He caught a fox.

Niduuy c'a fael.
He also caught a lynx.

Sii du' c'ekol.
As for me, nothing.

Dii yaen' dii deggha t'aen ine'esen.
I thought that he was doing this just for himself.

Xu sdenta ni'ael'es'aas.
I sets traps in a different area.

Yedu' k'alii uyic'esyaayi.
But nothing went into them.

Yet xona Christmas kuzdlaen 'el.
Finally it was Christmas and,

"N'tiy 'udaa'a Chistochina 'udaa'a studiaelde," silnii.
"Well, let's go downriver to Chistochina," he told me.

Xona 'udaat stezdaetl.
Then we started downriver.

Tsa' zes sii du' yae' k'a nelic'ae' u'el tuisyaa.
I went with him that way with our dogs and those skins.

'Udaat tsa' zes xona store dasnidaedl 'el tsa' zes 'endela.
Down there we entered the store and he sold those skins.

Ti lzaasi lzaasi t'ae' ule' ghaldael.
Oh, the money, a lot of money was given to him.

Nts'e t'aen nildziyilae.
What he did was divide it.

Nildziyilae.
He divided it up.

Gaa ighaan' ts'en' yilcuut.
He took half of it.

"Gaann c'aan u'el 'udughukaet."
"With this you buy food for yourself."

Ti k'alii lzaasi da xu' da ko'eltsaez.
Oh, I had never seen money like this.

Yik'ets'en' c'aan ditloggo.
At that time food was cheap.

Xuta c'aan 'u'eskaet.
I bought some food.

Tae' xatl yiit saann ta xatl yiit, c'aan yaen' no canned food da c'ile' xa' c'aan zaay.
(It fit) just barely in the sled, just the food, there was no canned food, just flour and rice.

"Unggu 'unggu 'ael zelaay k'alii n'el nadzghesdaale.
"I won't go back with you upland, upland (where) I have traps.

Nen k'a uyii cu c'ezdaade nen k'a nts'en' talael.
If anything is in them, it will be yours.

Xona xona nc'a' gaa duu txesdaal, "silnii ts'en'.
I will stay here without you," he told me.

'Unuugh 'uniit sunghae Jack Nikolai kiilninn bananesdyaade.
I went back upriver to my older brother called Jack Nikolai.

'Ael sts'en' teldaeh.
He gave me some traps.

Snaan 'ael' zdlaa ts'en' xuk'a k'alii kanaalsiltale.
Mother's traps were set and I hadn't gone to sleep yet.

Yidi'i su yizdaa le' 'el nanictesdzet.
I began to think what might be in them.

Xantaey' sunghae sunghae Jack Nikolai,
Right away my older brother Jack Nikolai (said).

"Nt'iy nadaegge s'el nanughudaali."
"You should stay here with me two nights."

"'Ene', 'unggu snaan snaan 'ael' yii yaen' gha nicniisdzet ts'en'
"No, all I can think about are my mother's traps up there and

xantaey' 'ael tanatxosdya'."
I should go back to the traps right away."

Yii c'a yits'en xona natiisdyaade.
I started back then.

Tetsta xona nanesdya.
I got back at night.

Snaan, "Nt'iy ntlen?" silnii.
Mother said to me, "Where is your brother-in-law?"

"'Udaa' sc'a' xona k'alii s'el 'ael tastlaale silnii."
"He told me he'll be downriver and that he won't trap with me."

Gha yii k'alii kanaalsiltale.
I hadn't yet gone to sleep.

C'aan snaan gha nanelyaa.
I brought the food to my mother.

"Nts'e gha' c'aan nle' ghidaek?"
"How did you get this food?"

"Stlen tsa' zes 'endezdlaay Izaasi ighaan' ts'en' sts'en' teldaedl kaen'."
"With the skins that my brother-in-law sold and the money that he gave me half of."

"Tsin'aen!
"Thanks!"

Nghanicdelnen.
You were fortunate.

Gha yen du' ntlen yen daagga' xona tsaey nastatniil."
Because of your brother-in-law, then, we will have tea."

Sacagha na'en xuta 'ael ta tseh ts'en' k'a niduuy ggaal yizdaay.
In the morning out there at the first snare was a lynx.

T'ae' xona su 'ael ta 'ael sanicdelnen.
Then I got really lucky at trapping.

'Ael danctnesgheli 'el, nadaeggi bets'edet'uudzi zel'ael.
Before the trapping season closed, I trapped two cross foxes.

Nunyeggaay, yii yii cu 'encdiilaay.
The foxes, I sold them.

Yii cu kaen' c'aan ggaay snaan gha 'oosniic.
With that (money) I got some groceries for mother.

Yii su gaann k'adiit xona kecdezelt'aet.
Now with this I had then become self-supporting.

Yihwts'en xona xona k'ensdzet.
And then finally I grew up.

K'adii na'aat s'el ghida'en yen cu xona k'e'idzet.
Then my wife (Katie), she too was grown up.

Yidi 'uka uts'en' tiisyyaa?
Why did I go to her?

Yet xona kuusniic
Then I got married.¹⁰

Yet su xona dae' xona yii k'at'aen' sc'a' hwdi'a'.
At that time it seemed that I was unlucky.

Nihbaay k'alii zel'aele.
I could not catch a weasel.

T'ae' sc'a' hwdi'a'.
I was really unlucky.

¹⁰ Fred and Katie were married on April 8, 1932, in Batzibuetas.

Yidi gha' snaan tsaa' ka'uniisdaann yii di c'acu t'ae' c'ekoldze' nixuns'aan.
Whatever I had saved in mother's cache I used up completely.

Yet si cu stlen John Sanford xii'edini'i.
There was my brother-in-law, the one they called John Sanford.

Yen du' stlen uk'iil' 'esdlaen.
I sure miss my brother-in-law.

Yen nts'e tse'faen gha' xu' c'aan ggaay ta sts'en' teldel.
Somehow he helped me, giving me groceries.

Yii gha' ta kost'aen.
Because of him (his generosity) I had a home.

'Utsiit t'ae' c'aan 'aede ninahwdelnen.
Down there, (at Batzulnetas) there had been famine again.

Yidi gha' sii nighiziin?
Why did he like me?

'Adii s'el ghida'.
Then he was staying with me.

Xona 'utsen 'un'e tiisya.
Then I went to the river and then upriver.

Debae 'uka tiisya.
I went (hunting) for sheep.

Men Dilende stsucde zdaa.
My grandmother was staying at 'Where It Flows into the Lake' (creek on south side of Tanada Lake).

S'aat unaan ye zdaa.
My wife's mother was staying there.

Xoxoxo nin' 'edinit'sii ts'en'.
Oh, that is windswept country.

Sacaan, "Ene' sez'ae nts'e nt'ae?"
In the morning (I said), "I wonder what my uncle (Nabesna John) is doing?"

Yen 'unaann yen uts'en' txosya', "xu'edesnii.
I should go across there to him," I told them.

"Agha xu lughiyaal ts'en'," stsucde silnii.
"You hurry and go then," grandmother told me.

Sez'ae gha nesya.
I went to (visit) my uncle (Nabesna John).

Ukol.
He was gone.

Jack John dii yaen' c'a zdaa.
Only Jack John (Justin) was there (at Nabesna Bar).¹¹

"Nta' nt'iy da?"
"Where's your father?"

"Utsuugh Nabaes Na' zdaa le'," silnii.
"He is probably down by the Nabesna River," he told me.

"Uk'e txosya'," udesnii.
"I should go after him," I told him.

"Kehwdaa'aal k'ent'ae?"
"Does it look like I can find him?"

"K'a'a da nez'ae tsaey 'aede dlaen k'ent'a.
"Truly it seems that your uncle is without tea.

Kadii gaa c'aan ggaay zdlaay yii 'utsen uts'en' xatl yii baghuldaelde."
Now take these groceries here to him in a sled."

"Yedu' nts'e gha' kehwdaa'aal?"
"How will I find him?"

Pencil le' dadyel ts'en' "Gaa duu tiyaal, gaa duu tiyaal.
Taking a pencil (he showed me), "You will go here this way, go this way.

Gaa dae' tkut'ae nuu yiit.
Here it is brushy.

'Utgadze tinitaande c'e'eni k'etku'aede.
From above, the trail seems like a den.

Gha yet c'a tik'etighitaande c'ena' ts'en'," dae' silnii.
There the trail turns off toward the river," he told me.

'Utsen xaltitltses.
I started off in a sled toward the river.

Xu' nii k'ehwdghatael xu' xu' xu' gha yen du' uk'et.
I followed just as he said, here, then here, then here, (going) after him.

Dae' xuk'a luut yaen' nlaen.
There was ice everywhere.

Xona 'utsit yet xu' niide yihwts'en' ghasyaal 'el hwngal'aen'.
Then I went toward the river as he had said and I looked.

T'ae' lts'ii 'el kol.
There was no wind.

Xey naghatsiitl ts'en k'a xuk'a tkut'ae.
The winter snowfall was still there.

¹¹ Jack John Justin is Fred's older clan brother. See chap. 20.

K'ay' k'edastsiihl xuk'a 'uyggu t'aen.
Willows were covered with snow, still weighted down.

Gaa xu' niide yet dangge kezelggaac ts'en'.
I went up there as he had said.

'Unggu yaen' hic'ae tseh ghasyaal.
I just went upland ahead of the dogs.

Lic'ae sk'e xalghatili.
The dogs pulled the sled behind me.

Xoxoxo!
Oh!

K'a'a duu c'e'en k'etkut'aede.
Truly it was like a den there.

K'ay' t'ae' lestloxi.
Willows were bunched together.

Nadaexi 'el 'ungge ta c'e'en k'etkut'ae.
With the snow above it was like a den.

'Utggg ghas'edzi tahluu nahluude gaa sez'ae xu ninaa ts'en'.
I stepped upon the trail in the snow where my uncle had come through in the fall.

Yii tahluu zes'es ts'en' gaa yet c'a xona slic'ae' xal t'aciit nelggaac ts'en'.
I stepped on the snow trail and here I went back to the sled handlebar.

Gha yet c'e'en k'etkut'aede igge' ta tak'ehwdastset ts'en'.
There I disappeared through the stretch that looked like a den.

Xona xona xona gaa yet c'e'en k'etkut'aede little ways ghanesyaade.
And then I went a little ways through the place that looked like a den.

Xona tahluu, tahluu xona slic'ae' kuyaana tahluu 'edzi gha' tahluu k'eze ni'etsta.
Then the trail, my dog sensed the trail from stepping on the trail and stepping to the side of the trail.

Tahluu k'et tagheyaal.
He was following the trail.

Men k'et slic'ae' tseh ni'elggaas ts'en'.
On the lake I went ahead of the dogs.

Tahluu k'et men k'e tahluu kezts'ii ts'en' slic'ae' tseh k'a tesyiis.
On the lake the trail had been windswept and I went ahead of my dogs.

Xona 'utggat sez'ae ghat zdaade yet ts'en' ghasyaal.
Finally I approached the place where my uncle was staying.¹²

¹² See Jack John Justin's description of their home on lower Lick Creek (chap. 12).

Nadaegge 'iinn xona sts'en' ni'iltaen ts'en'.
I had two children at that time.

Yet su xona 'utggat yihwts'en' ghasyaal.
Then I came up there.

"Sez'ae 'ii! Deniigi xu'aede kudlaen."
"Oh, my uncle! They (my family) are without moose (meat)."

Dastaann k'et c'etsin' nts'ey c'a nt'ae.
There was so much meat on that rack.

Liyaann' 'iinn ba'aa xugha kon' delk'an'.
Outside he was keeping a fire for the old dogs.

Liyaann' 'iinn delts'ii.
He kept some old dogs.

Xu'snakaey 'iinn kughistle'e ts'en'.
They had no children.

"Sazae nts'iy c'a dit'aen?"
"My nephew, what are you doing?"

"Sunghae 'Gaa duu gaa duu sta' tsae' aede ni'idzet k'ent'ae.
"My older brother (Jack John Justin) said, 'Here, it looks like my father has run out of tea.

Sta' ts'en' ghiyaal' sijnii."
You go to my father, he told me."

"Yik'e stsucde 'iinn c'aan 'aede?" dae' udesmii.
"Why is my grandmother without food?" I said to him.¹⁵

Tets ce'e sayelaets.
He cooked a lot for me that night.

Tets ta de'ii ta stel'aen ts'en'.
He was happy to see me that night.

Sacaan 'el, "Nt'iy sazae tighitnak de da?"
In the morning he said, "Well nephew, are you tired?"

Natggu natggu snenn' k'e nghul'aen'e."
You should look over my country up above there."

Xona u'el tiisyyaa.
Then I went with him.

Cil'elaende tets'atnaxi gha' 'el ts'estnigi yidi ghule' de da.
When I was young I didn't know how to get tired no matter what happened.

¹⁵ Fred John is asking Nabesna John, a mediocure man, why they have been having bad luck at hunting.

Ta'estnaxa k'a 'el ts'estniigi.
I didn't know how to get tired.

U'el tiisya.
I went with him.

Deniigi cugha c'a cugha.
Moose were here and there.

Ts'ilden k'a xona inul'aen'de sutnii.
He wanted me to see the place all at once.

"Gaa duu k'e xona naxacdestiisde.
"Here is where I go hunting.

Sacaanta hwdezk'ats gaa duu natesdiis.
In the mornings it is cold and I go back there.

Sacaan kahwtel'iista xona xona dae' ts'abael ghena ta tezyaa.
In the morning, as it gets light, it (a moose) goes behind a spruce tree.

Xona deniigi nghul'aen'e su t'en'aen."
Then you should see the moose I pointed out to you."

Ti ik'edenc'n deniigi uta ts'isimildaetl nec'aayts'en'.
Oh, eight moose ran out from there (going) away from us.

Xoxoxo sez'ae sez'ae du'. "Xu' tkut'aede la zidaa.
Oh, my uncle, my uncle said, "You stay in this kind of area.

Yet su cu xona gaa du' ts'elk'ey deniigi istsaade
I have one moose cached (in the snow) here and

sacaan de' yii naghultaet de'," silnii.
you should bring it back in the morning," he told me.

Sacaan ta uts'en' natezeltset ts'en'.
In the morning I ran back to it.

Xatl yii tsaghasyel.
I loaded it onto a sled.

'Utsii u'el naneltlet.
I went quickly to the river with it.

Yeldu' xona yeldu' xona, "Sez'ae sacaan ngha txasnael xa'," udesnii.
And then, "Uncle, in the morning I am going to move in with you," I told him.

"Dae' datsuuxe c'aan 'aede t'ae' sa kekutsaas su."
"Over that way by the river it is really hard for me being without food."

"Xu' dat'aen', s'el s'el nughuyaal," silnii.
"If that is how it is, then camp with me," he told me.

Yet su xona natiisdeyaa.
Then I started back.

Xona Nataelde nanesdyaa.
I returned to 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulnetas).

Nadaeggede' uniidze niisdyya ts'en'.
I made it back in two nights.

Nataelde nanesdyaa.
I arrived back at 'Roasted Salmon Place'.

S'el zdaann xu' "Yet 'unooxo sez'ae ts'en' nastudael.
I said to my wife, "Let's go upriver there to my uncle.

C'aan 'aede," udesnii.
We are without food," I told her.

Yik'edze c'itsiy tnaey 'iinn yaen' 'el ghasda' ts'en'.
Before that I had been living too much in the white man's style.

Koht'aenn 'iinn c'aann' k'alii ugheldze' s'el ts'akatniige.
I did not know the Native food very well.

C'aan 'aede c'a k'alii kudlael.
It was not actually starvation.

Sii du' sden ta c'itsiy tnaey 'iinn c'aann' 'aede stakudasiin'.
I couldn't stand being without the white man's food.

K'alii xu' desniile, yii si cu xu' desnii.
I never said that (before), but that's what I say.

Yii gha ciil ghile'.
There (at Batzulnetas) was a young man.

Sazae 'el 'el yen 'iinn gha yet xatl nilaa.
My nephews came there with sleds.

"Utsene snakaey 'iinn sa'ulael," udesnii.
"Bring the children to the river for me," I told him.

"Agha," skenii.
"Right away," they told me.

Ba' luk'ae ba' n'el ta ninasc'elcuut ts'en'.
We were keeping some dry fish, dry salmon.

Luk'ae ba' negha c'ilaen.
We had some dry salmon.

Lic'ae c'aann' datsahghiyel ts'en', tazes 'el sdoo 'el ta di Nghildaetl.
They put in dog food and they put in a tent and a stove.

Xona 'utsene sez'ae ts'en' stezdaetl.
Then we went down to my uncle.

Yeldu' xona 'utsii sez'ae ts'ets'idaetl.
Then we came out to the (Nabesna) river to my uncle.

Yeldu' xona detsen c'a' kats'idaetl.
We came there to avoid hunger.

Xona ts'esdeyes.
Then we were safe.

S'el zdaann 'el yeldu', "Nt'iy ngha da ugheldze' koht'aenn 'elaende?
I told my wife, "What kind of man am I for you?"

Koosniigi ts'en k'alii nihbaay dzelghehe su tkut'aede," udesnii.
I have not even killed a weasel for myself since I got married," I told her.

Cu deniigi t'ae' s'el 'etadalnen su.
I had never seen so many moose.

"Deniigi nilyitxesghaal," dae' ine'esen.
"I'll kill one moose after the other," I thought.

Sts'en' c'ine' c'ilaen.
There was a hex on me.

Yii daagga' no good 'elaen.
That was why I was no good.

Sez'ae xu' silnii.
My uncle told me this.

Sacaan ta c'edan'a skol.
I was already gone early in the morning.

Deniigi kol.
There were no moose.

C'edan'a deniigi sasdeyes.
Already the moose had evaded me.

Yeldu' s'el c'edel'aan.
Then he (Nabesna John) sang with me.

"'Ene' sc'a' natidaasde kudeldiyede dae'.
"No, you go away from me that way a little ways.

Xona deniigi ts'elk'ey dzilghael nicuunn, "dae' silnii.
Then you'll kill one moose for yourself, a bull," he told me.

"Naxu cu c'ilaen."
"Something is over there."

Nts'e c'a nii de da?
How could he say (know) that?

Dzaenta txesghaan le'.
I should kill some any day.

Yii xuk'a dzaenn yii daagga' deniigi ka se'a' 'en nasildaetl.
Still, every day because of it (the hex), the moose were running away from me.

Se'a' 'en nasildaetl.
They were running away from me.

Yii xuk'a xuk'a kens'aa.
I kept on trying.

Xona uc'a' natesdaasi 'el
Then I went away from him and

ts'elk'ey nicuunn ggaay dzezelghaan xu' sdine'.
I killed one small bull for myself just as he had said
to me.

Xu' k'alii' xu' lu'esyaale de su, xuk'a yae' k'a hwdene sdzalghael le'.
If I had not gone there (to him), then poverty might have killed me.¹⁴

Sez'ae s'el ghadyiin' ts'en' yen xona k'entanasiltaen.
My uncle had made medicine for me, and he turned my luck back around.

The man, the richest man in this area was Sanford Charley.¹⁵
Adam, Katie, Frank Charley, the richest people.
You come along, they got food for you.
They got place to sleep for you.
They never turn you down.
They never turn down little kids either.
The smallest kids come in their house, they gotta feed them.
That's all.
Four brothers.

My uncle, we up here (in Mentasta).
My uncle, Mentasta Sam, he's a rich man.
Nobody around up here.
Sure as heck people come along.
After I got married, then, well, people come to my house.
They never even go to my uncle.

¹⁴ Fred John uses the word *hwdene* here, which refers to the Aitutia social class of lowest status.

¹⁵ Fred John told this segment at an elders' conference in Mentasta in May, 1984. It concluded a shorter version of the preceding story. He used English here to make his remarks more understandable to those who did not understand his language.

They come to our house.
That's what it is (being a rich man).

The man sees people.
Indian see each other.

Nilehnel'iix.
They see each other.

"Gha su yen xona koht'aenn tafaehi,"
"That guy, he is gonna be a man,"

he (Sanford Charley) told me.
"Someday that man gonna make living."
Well, he's right.
I make a living right now.
I take care of myself now.

C'edan'a tnaey 'iinn hnehdelghosi medicine dadilaen ts'en'.
When the people of the past talked it sounded like medicine.

It gonna work.
Young people right now.

Right now my father-in-law sts'en' vihgilya'.
Right now my father-in-law (Sanford Charley) has talked to me.
Sometimes it looks just like a picture.

Sts'en' kadadedax.
The words appear to me.

Right now, my kids, 'iinn ts'enelt'e'i no'osen.
Right now, my kids, you think that you are many.

No.

How many 'iinn sadae 'iinn s'el ts'inidaegge 'iinn?
How many sisters and brothers (did I have)?

Just one left in this village.
How many, sazae (my nephew, speaking to Gene Henry).

how many n'el ts'inidaegge 'iinn ghile?
how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Only Gene left.

Old timer he tell 'em,

"Nanset tanuu k'et ketniruts'iide gha yet gha yet nen yaen' nitilts'el xu su dit'ae."
"Out on a windswept island only you will be left there."

Yedi 'uka c'a 'unsogh tanuu k'et ketninit's'iide txasyaal?
How come I am going to go out onto a windswept island?

Ts'ehwt'naal'niic de da?
Am I helpless?

Dae' sii yaen' nitxalts'el t'ehdine'.
Thus they said that I would be the only one left.

Tanuu k'e nitxalts'eli yii laan'a kii'edini'.
What they said, that I would be left on an island, is true.

K'adii gaa s'el ts'inizedi the same.
Now here, the one I grew up with (Gene Henry), it is the same (for him).

'Alden c'a duu sdelts'iide niltiy stal'uil.
We will strengthen each other as we sit together here.

Gha yen cu dii yaen' sii sk'e ni'ilt's'et.
Like me, he is the only one left.

That's really words.
Old timer words.

'Adii nuxon du' all tomorrow k'alii nanictuhdzedi.
Now you are not thinking about tomorrow.

Next month c'a cu k'alii nanicdzohsedi.
You have not started thinking about next month.

Dzaenn yaen' k'alii ts'ekosniize.
We are not alive just today.

K'adan'ade' nets'en' hwdezzaan.
The future is approaching.



John Sanford and Tommy Jackson with dog team on upper Jack Creek, 1931. Photo by Jack John Justin.



Residents of Chisana in the 1940s. Left to right: Charley Toby, Jack John Justin, Sherry Nikolai, unidentified boy, Bessie Joe, Suzie Joe, Martha Mark. Photo courtesy of Jack John Justin.

II
Stories of Upper Ahtna Territory
and Land Use



Mount Sanford, *Huunidi K'elt'aeni* 'Upriver K'elt'aeni', as seen from the southwest on April 11, 1981, following a landslide in which debris fell 10,000 vertical feet. The 16,237 ft. peak is a prominent figure within the Ahtna region.

The name *K'elt'aeni* is applied to Mount Wrangell, and *Huedaandi K'elt'aeni*, 'Downriver K'elt'aeni' is Mount Drum. Ahtna speakers say that the name *K'elt'aeni* (or *K'elt'aenn* in the Upper dialect) is difficult to translate. It seems to mean 'The One That Controls', i.e. that controls the weather.

The December, 1977 issue of *The Alaskana* quotes Sanford Nicolai's comments in a pot-latch speech:

... all this time thousands of years, Indians look up and think that it is Khultane--hundreds of generations of our forefathers look up and think it Mount Khultane; but Indians not very smart. First white man come along ten years ago, he say Ah, Hah, Mount Sanford . . . and Mount Sanford it is today, my people.

Lt. Allen (see chap. 13) in 1885 named the mountain Sanford after his great-grandfather, Reuben Sanford. Photo courtesy of Carl Benson, Geophysical Institute, University of Alaska.

Introduction to Section II

Traditional Upper Ahtna territory has formally recognized boundaries. The Upper Ahtna region includes the upper reaches of the Copper River, a few streams that flow into the upper Nabesna River, the entire Slana River, and the upper Tok River (above the ridge east of Mt. Neuberger). There are extensive data in the six narratives presented here to show that the Upper Ahtna used this entire area in their subsistence activities. An intricate system of trails connected the four or five winter villages with numerous campsites in the region and extended beyond to the neighboring bands' territories. During times of aboriginal warfare, the rugged mountain terrain in this area between the central Alaska Range and the Wrangell Mountains provided the *Tat'l'ahwt'aenn* with considerable strategic advantage.

Reckord (1983:76) makes some interesting comments about Ahtna concepts of territoriality:

Ahtna oral history indicates that each Ahtna local band inhabited a bounded territory over which the band claimed special use rights. In general band territories included fishing sites along the Copper or Chitina rivers, a permanent winter village house nearby, and hunting territories extending into the higher elevations and connected to the lowlands by trails following tributary rivers or streams. Usually each band territory was bisected by one of the major tributaries, which provided the main artery of transportation for the local band. In this way, the territories of most bands drew land from several different environmental zones, each offering a unique combination of subsistence resources. Our knowledge of nineteenth-century settlements indicates that a major variation existed in the western Ahtna subregion. In several cases, main fishing sites, permanent winter villages, and hunting camps were all located in close proximity along lakeshores.

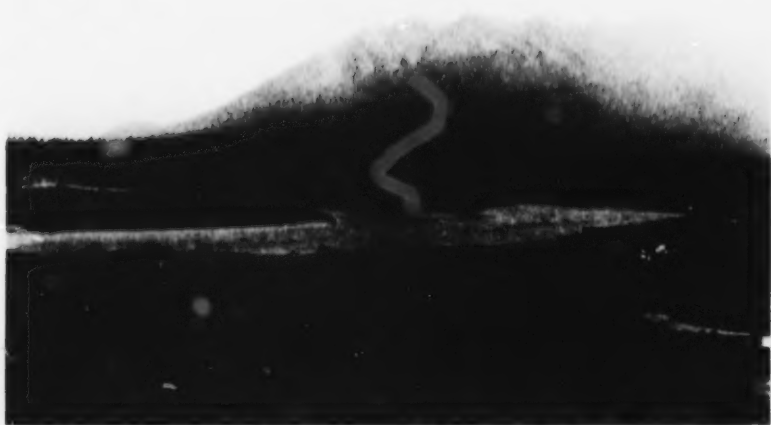
The three narratives by Adam Sanford, Katie John, and Fred John (chaps. 17, 18, 19) are extremely detailed. These travel and subsistence stories are told from different home villages in the upper Copper River region, and the territories in the stories overlap. Consequently, we can learn about the ranges and activities of individual bands, from the Sanford River to the head of the Copper River, to Mentasta, and beyond, into the Tanana drainage. We see that traditional subsistence activity was maintained until the 1940s and was a highly structured round, involving precise knowledge of the country, the weather, the water, and the animals. The narratives by Adam Sanford and Fred John (chaps. 17 and 19) demonstrate the interregional nature of the subsistence cycle. This was a flexible arrangement whereby Upper Ahtna might go north to Ketchumstock or Northway to hunt caribou in winter, and people from Northway or Tetlin might come to the upper Copper River in summer to catch salmon. As Strong (1972: chap. 3, pp. 18-19) notes, "Thus a network existed over a wide region for sharing food resources, and this network was particularly active in years of poor food supplies." Jack John Justin, who is both Upper Tanana and Ahtna, gives some important details about the village sites in the adjacent upper Nabesna River drainage (chap. 20). Andy Brown's account (chap. 21) of the trail from *Nataekle* to the lower Copper River, around the bases of Mount Sanford and Mount Drum, complements the areas surveyed in the other stories.

Over 210 Upper Ahtna place names and a system of at least 28 mountain passes within the territory, or leading into and out of the territory, have been recorded. Ahtna oral place names make up a stable, conservative system, learned by experience and memorization. To date, more than 1500 Ahtna place names have been recorded (Kari 1983), with over 370 mentioned in this book. The colorful folk poetry expressed in the place names is noteworthy.

The maps in Mendenhall and Schrader (1903) (see p. 4) and Mendenhall (1905) present in some detail the major trails in use in the region at the onset of the gold rush. The trails used by explorers and miners almost always followed established Native trails. Mendenhall (1905:23) noted the importance of this pass system for the prehistory of the area:

The series of passes through the Alaska Range, of which Mentasta is the best known, are so favorable to free movement between the Copper and the tributaries of the Yukon that migration back and forth across this range takes place freely now, as it probably has since the first native settlements here.

The maps on pages 10, 11, and 18 show many of the places mentioned in the following narratives.



The Stana River, at a place called *Natatene*, 'Crossing Trail'. The mountain in the background is *Tuu Ts'eni*, 'The One on the Water Side'. Photo by Priscilla Russell Kari.



Natael Nemi, 'Roasted Salmon Country' (Batzulnetas) and the very head of the Copper River, *Ts'itu' T'laa*, as seen from the top of Mount Wrangell. The mountain in the center is *Sizaam*, 'Heart'. Photo by University of Alaska Geophysical Institute.

Tene Kayahwdilt'aende Trail Markers

Huston Sanford

In 1969 a tree blaze with markings was discovered near Mile 93 of the Tok Cutoff. This site, on the west side of the Tok River, is in the traditional territory of the Mentasta people. The blaze, made with a stone axe, was determined by tree-ring dating to be 122 years old. Thus the markings could have been made before 1850 or perhaps more recently. The markings, painted with charcoal and animal fat, depict five people, an animal, and two mountain ranges. This tree was shown to several elders in Mentasta, Tetlin, and Tanacross. No specific interpretation of the sign was made, but it was agreed that this was an example of a trail message. The tree is now stored at the University of Alaska Museum in Fairbanks (Olsen and Vitt, 1969).

Long time ago they used to have trail marked from Nabesna to Batzulnetas
and to Slana to Chistochina and Mentasta and Tanacross.
All the way up thru Miller Point (near the confluence of the Little Tok and
Tok rivers).
All them places where people used to be.
The greatest hunting place they used to know where this guy's staying.
Another guy, they know each other far apart.
And when they go visit, they come on that place they moving to, their game
camp.
They let 'em know.
They making mark things.
And when this guy get there, they said, "They go there."
I don't know how, but they make a mark with rocks.
Sometimes they mark the brush.
They make a design on it, just like you leave a little piece of note.
And they learn that kind and they know.
They tell, "Oh yeah, they go up to there."
If they got a moose, they make a mark there.
"Yeah, they moving there and they got moose."
Yeah, they got moose or caribou or sheep or bear.
Whatever they get, they know and they could tell.
"Yeah, they got bear," they say.
And they go there.
And they could tell what these other people got, just like they leave a little piece
of note.
Some wise old man can look and, "Yeah, they moving to there and they camp
there."
And this creek.
They call all the creeks.
They in there.
When you get there they going to move left or right.
They said you gotta go right.
That's the way the mark is.

I seen 'em when I was a kid how this mark is and what they call smoke signal.
My daddy he used to go see the marks in there and he say, "This the way he
supposed to be, this is where he is."

And all these mark in there came out real handy.

Just like you write a little piece of note for the other people.

And these people go to Nabesna.

They moving downriver and up the river.

Then they go to Mentasta.

They come up and they see the mark there where they go.

"Okay," they said, "they move up the river and they camp at what creek."

There's four or five creeks all the way up.

They mark which creek.

They camp, camp from there up five mile.

And they tell each other, "They go there, we move there."

They go there, sure enough, they're there.

They never miss.

Lots old timers in old days they know what's going on.

To Nabesna, Shushana, all the way through from Nabesna to Batzulnetas,
all them places, Mentasta, Tanacross.

They go visit once a year to each other.

Sometimes they go other places.

They know other people going to come and visit them in their village.

And they just make lotsa mark.

They know how.



Lucy John and Nabsna John, 1930. Photo by Robert McKennan.

Powell on Trail Signs

Around the turn of the century, prospector-explorer Addison Powell wrote this excellent description of Ahtna trail signs (1909:286-88).

When these Indians break up camp to go on a hunt, or to some trading post, they indicate how many persons have departed and the course that they took by sticking a pole in the ground for each person, and leaning it in the direction he has gone. To each pole is attached a remnant of some masculine or feminine wearing apparel to indicate the sex of the person it represents. Age is indicated by the length of the pole. A cache post, or the surface of an old tree nearby, may be found marked with charcoal, or a lead pencil... bearing such a diagram as the following:



This would mean that a man with a gun, a squaw, a little girl and a dog had left the bank of the river, when the moon was half full; that their first day's travel will terminate on the bank of a creek, where they will camp on the near shore; that their next day's travel will terminate on the bank of another creek where they will camp on the opposite shore; and that at noon of the next day, they will make their final camp at the foot of the mountain.



Residents of Chistochina, 1937. Back row, left to right: Snall Charley, Adam Sanford, Nickolai John, Lemmie Charley, Frank Charley, Teddy Sanford, Herman Gene, Walter Sanford, Ralph Sanford, Mrs. Harold Richards, unidentified woman. Middle row: Joyce Sanford, Kate Sanford, Jessie John, Minnie Charley, Mena Charley, Howard Sanford, Irene Nickolai, Andrew Nickolai, Jessie Nickolai, Chief Nickolai. Front row: Violet Nickolai, unidentified child, Jerry Charley, Hyland Sanford, Elizabeth Joe. On ground: Tsiltse. Photo courtesy of Walter Phillips.

C'uka Ts'ul'aen'i gha Nen' Ta'stedel dze' How We Went Hunting Out in the Country

Adam Sanford

Adam Sanford, the younger brother of Sanford Charley, died in 1983 at age 96. This story was tape-recorded on June 13, 1981, in Chistochina. He told four travel sequences and mentioned 66 different place names. The journeys are as follows: 1) from the mouth of Sanford River up to Sanford Glacier and north, on the eastern slopes of Mount Sanford, and then back to the Copper River; 2) from Chistochina up the Chistochina River and back down; 3) from Chistochina up the Chistochina River and west to the upper Delta River, through Isabel Pass to the Tanana River at Delta, and back again; 4) from the mouth of Sanford River down to Gulkana, back to Tulsone Creek, then up to Batzulnetas, Tanada Lake, and to the Nabesna River. This narrative is an important statement about people and places in the Chistochina area and demonstrates Adam's intimate knowledge of the country.

(1)

Ts'itael Caegge sc'ilaen.

I was born at 'Mouth of River That Flows Straight' (the mouth of the Sanford River).

Yet su nisiltaen.

There I was born.

Yet su xaa k'enesdzet ts'en' duugh nats'idaetl.

Mainly I grew up there and we would come back there.

Ts'itael Caegge, Ts'itael Caegge neghak'ae.

'Mouth of River That Flows Straight', 'Mouth of River That Flows Straight' was our home.

Stsucde 'iinn ye hdaghalts'e'.

My grandmothers lived there.

Stsucde 'iinn ye hdaghalts'e'.

My grandmothers lived there.

Yet su stsucde 'iinn gha nats'idaetl.

We would go back there to my grandmother's people.

Yihwts'en Ts'itael Na' ngge' nen'ta 'skultsiin.

From there we had hunting territory up 'River That Flows Straight' (Sanford River).

Luk'ae gha 'sdelts'iix Ts'itael Caegge.

We would stay for salmon at 'Mouth of River That Flows Straight'.

Luk'ae nits'elcet.

We would put up fish.

Xona xa' xu hwdezeltiy.
Then I was just about a teenager.

Yihwts'en xona nen' ta'stedel debae ka deniigi 'el udzih 'el.
Then we would go up into the country for sheep and moose and caribou.

Ts'itael Na' ngge' 'stedel dze' 'unggat Bastadeli ts'e' ta 'sneyel.
We would go upland from 'River That Flows Straight' and we would camp up at 'The One We Go Out To' (hull north of Sanford River mouth).

Duu yihwts'en xona 'unggat Natii Caegge yedu' xona
From here, then over to 'Natii Mouth' (creek into Sanford River from south), then

yetdu' xona nits'edel.
we would stop there.

Yihwts'en xona Natii Na' ngge', 'ungge du' kudeldiye.
From there, then up from 'Natii River', up there a short distance.

Yet nduugh miles kulaen?
How many miles is it?

Seven (or) eight miles, I guess.

Yet su xona debae gha 'stedel.
There we went for sheep.

Debae ts'eghaax.
We would kill sheep.

Ghayet k'a yii kaen' taade 'sneyel.
We stayed there three days (living) on it.

Du' yihwts'en ts'inats'edel dze' 'ungge.
From there, then we would start out again upland.

'Utgu daagh ngge' 'ungga Ts'itael T'aa ts'e',
Up above the treeline to 'Headwaters of River That Flows Straight' (upper Sanford River).

yihwts'en 'unggat Tsaani 'Ael Na' yet kets'edel.
from there on up we reached 'Bear Trap Creek' (creek from south above Natii River).

Yet kanaat debae una' c'ilaen, you know.
Across from there, there are sheep on that creek, you know.

Yet cu debae ka hu'stedel.
There we would hunt again for sheep.

Debae ts'eghaax.
We would kill sheep.

Ye naxaelts'eldeli 'el taade k'a yet ts'eneyel.
We would pack it back and we would stay there three days.

Cu yihwts'en xona Natii Na' Ts'itael Na' kenats'edel.
From there we would go back to 'Natii River' and to 'River That Flows Straight'.

Ts'itael Na' ngge' 'ungge hwnaghe 'stedel dze'
Going up from 'River That Flows Straight' into a clear place,

'unggot Una' Hwnelk'ezi Na' ye nits'edel.
we would stop at 'Its Creek Is a Brown Area' (creek into Sanford River from the south above 'Natii River').

Yedu' xona debae c'ilaen.
There were sheep there.

'Unggat huu gha yet k'a 'sdelts'iix.
There we stayed up at the glacier.

Nduude k'a yet 'sneyel.
We camped there awhile.

Tiye yet 'sdelts'iix xona debae kae.
We stayed there a long time (living) on sheep.¹

Ts'itael Na' huu ts'e' kudeldiye yet hwts'en.
The glacier of 'River That Flows Straight' (Sanford Glacier) is near there.

About two (or) three miles, I guess.

Yet 'unaane kets'enaes.
We moved across there.

'Unaats'en cu debae gha yet 'sdelts'iix.
On the other side there we stayed for sheep.

Cu yihwts'en xona ts'enats'edel dze' 'unggadze.
From there then we would start out again down from upland.

Danii ts'en nggase' tat'ax nggase' 'adii na'setnaes.
Then we would return from upriver looping through the upland country.

'Ungga yet ts'edelts'iix xu Kaghaa Na' hwdi'aande.
We stayed up there at a place called 'End Creek' (creek into Sanford River from north below Nathlie Mountain).

Su Kaghaa Caegge yet cu sdalts'iix.
We stayed also at 'End Mouth'.

¹ Powell, traveling on the upland trail from lower Copper River in 1898, met Talsona Nickoli (or Chief Nickoli of Chistochina) in the Upper Sanford River area. Powell (1909:57) states:

He was clothed in the Indian garb of dressed skins, and wore nothing of white man's make, not even a hat. His hair was kept out of his eyes by a rawhide string tied around his head, and he represented about as wild a human being as could be found in Uncle Sam's herd. He explained, by holding up his fingers and pulling down one at a time and repeating "tobay," [debae] that he had killed five mountain sheep. . . . As we departed, he, too, struck out for the mountains whence he had come.

Yihwts'en ts'enats'edel dze' 'utsii gge' kats'enaes Dit'ox Tl'aa ts'e'.
Starting out again from there, we would go up from the river to 'Nest Headwaters' (creek from north off Mount Sanford).

Dit'ox Tl'aa kats'enaes.
We would go up to 'Nest Headwaters'.

Big glacier (is) there, you know.

Dit'ox Tl'aa yet cu ts'edelts'iix debae gha.
We stayed there at 'Nest Headwaters' by the sheep.

Sesyaane' yaen' una' c'ilaen.
There are only rams on that creek.

Yii ts'eghaax xona yii kae yet 'sdalts'iix.
We killed some and we stayed there on that.

Xona yet hwts'en xona na'stetnaesi dahwtneidak.
As we came back from there it (the canyon) was steep.

Nilk'aedze' dahwtneidak xona saaneta kats'enaes.
It was steep on both sides and we could barely climb up.

Xona dae' ts'en Benta keniide yet c'a nits'enaes.
Then from there to where they call 'Among the Lakes' (lakes north of middle Sanford River), there we stopped.

Xona 'utsuughe ts'abaeli xu nel'aan xu k'e xona nats'enaes xona deniigi ka.
Then we came to where the tree line extends, (hunting) for moose.

Xona yehwts'en xona deniigi ka ye nits'enaes.
Then from there we stopped for moose.

K'alii ts'elk'ey deniigi ts'ezilghaele.
We didn't kill one moose.

Not much deniigi k'alii kulehe that time.
Not much moose (around) at that time.

Duu lek'a nildenta yaen'.
Only occasionally here and there.

Udzih yaen' c'ilaen, you know.
There were only caribou, you know.

Udzih yaen' c'ghile'.
There were only caribou.

Yehwts'en nadaeggi deniigi ts'elk'ey k'a 'szelghaes.
There we would kill only two or one moose.

Duu yehwts'en dadaa'a 'stenaesi 'utggu daaghe nae'.
From here we started downriver (going) up above the timberline.

Kaniit Una' Tuu Koley Na' yehwk'e nats'enaes.

The next place upriver, 'Creek That Has No Water' (creek from east above Sdzedi Na') we came back that far.

Yet du' xona xona udzih udzih tana'stedel.

There then, then caribou, we came back among caribou.

Udzih nelt'e'i nsiil laex.

There were lots of caribou, summer caribou.²

Una' Tuu Koley Na'.

'Creek That Has No Water'.

No water, that creek. Big creek, though.

Duu yet hwts'en xona 'uniit Saas Dzel k'et ninats'etnaes.

From there, then we would stop again upriver at 'Sand Mountain' (mountain on south bank of Boulder Creek).

'Utggat tes ghak'aay yet ninats'etnaes.

Up on the ridge of the hill we would stop.

Tseles tseles gha yet nits'enaes.

We stopped there for ground squirrels.

Sii du' k'alii tseles gha hwde'aha.

As for me, I didn't care much about ground squirrels.

Yaen' k'a natesdaas dze' du' yet tseles gha tiye 'sneyel.

I would just walk around and we camped there a long time for ground squirrels.

Tiye hwnelt'aede 'sneyel.

We camped quite a while.

Tseles keghaax.

They killed ground squirrels.

Xinasili' ts'e' dakiighilaes.

They would skin them and hang them up.

Kuhggan.

They dried them.

Du' yi k'ey hghel t'axdezdlaa.

They had some birch bark in dog packs.

Yi kunelt'os dze' xona cu ts'inats'etnaes.

They stuffed it (the meat) in (the dog packs) and then we started off again.

Du' xona Tsedghaazi T'aa nanaa 'uniit

Then to 'Rough Rock Headwaters' (upper Boulder Creek) across and upriver,

² Nsiil is the name for caribou that stay up in the mountains during warm weather.

fish camp nanaa 'uniit Kedileni Na',
across and upriver from the fish camp at 'Creek That Current Flows In' (creek into Copper
River south of Boulder Creek).

'utggat utl'aat Tsedghaazi Tl'aa yet yehwk'e nats'etnaes yet cu debae gha.
we would return up its headwaters to 'Rough Rock Headwaters' there again for sheep.

Yet cu debae una' c'ilaen.
That, too, is a sheep stream.

Debae gha yet cu 'sdelts'iix.
We stayed there too, for sheep.

Tiye 'sdelts'iix yet debae ts'eldael kae.
We stayed there a long time eating sheep.

Yihwts'en Kateni Na' ngge' 'el Kateni Na' ngge' cu 'stedel.
From there we went upland to 'Ascending Trail Creek' (Drop Creek or upper tributary of
Drop Creek).

Yet cu big river, big creek.
That, too, is a big river, big creek.

Ye na' ngge' lu'stediil debae gha.
We would go upland from that creek for sheep.

Kudeldiye debae c'ilaen, you know.
Sheep are nearby, you know.

Kudeldiyede k'a ts'eghaax.
We killed them nearby.

Naxaelts'eldiil.
We packed it back.

Ukae k'a 'sdelts'iix.
We just lived on that.

Yii k'a 'sc'eyaani kae 'stediil.
We would go living on what we ate.

Nekokaedi k'alii gha kustlaeghe.
Our food never ran out.

Cu ka'aat cu debae gha ts'ets'edel.
Again we would come out to another place for sheep.

Yihwts'en xona Tsedghaazi Na' nggase' na'stetnaes.
From there we would return from above via 'Rough Rock Creek' (Boulder Creek).

Nanuughe 'uniit ucaegge ts'enats'etnaes.
We came out to its mouth upriver and across.

Gha yet ucaegge yet luk'ae gha 'sdelts'iix xona.
There at the mouth we would stay for salmon then.

Luk'ae 'el dzaxdze' dzenax 'el c'ilaen, you know.
There were salmon and lots of fermented fish, you know.

'Sc'efiix.
We would make this.

Snaan dzenax c'efiix.
My mother made fermented fish.

Yi kae xona n'el ten ghan c'elaex xona.
Then that shelf ice (on the edge of the river) would appear.

Katie John asks:

'Unii gha yet Ts'itu' K'et kedi'aan?
Upriver there, is that called 'On the Major River' (fish camp near Chistochina)?

Adam Sanford:

Yes.

Xona yet netseh hdaghalts'e' 'iinn netseh ta kestlaak.
Those are the people who lived before us who died ahead of us.

Kutl'ahwdalnen.
They all died off.

Ts'inst'e' ye ghida'en yaen' yen gha kats'ezdaetl.
Only an old lady who used to live there, we came up to her there.

Gha yet su xona t'ae' kats'ezdaetl.
We, of course, went up there.

'Udaa' Ts'itael Caegge neghak'ae kughile'.
Our home was downriver at 'Mouth of River That Flows Straight' (Sanford River mouth).

Yihwts'en 1906 ldu' Tsiiis T'edze' Caegge kats'ezdaetl.
From there we came to 'Blue Ochre Mouth' (Chistochina River mouth) in 1906.

Yihwts'en xona 'ele' 'udaa' ts'enats'edele.
After that we did not go back downriver.

Yihwts'en nanaa 'uniit.
From there (it was) across and upriver.

(2)

Xona nahwluude kolaex,
Then when it became fall,

xona xona c'uka ts'ul'aen'i gha nen' ta'stedel nen' ten k'edze.
then we would go hunting out in the country on the frozen ground.

Tsiis T'edze' Na' ngge' Tsiis T'edze' Na' ngge' 'stedil dze'
Up from 'Blue Ochre River' (Chistochina River), we went up from 'Blue Ochre River' and

Nanaa 'ungga Katl'abese' gha ye 'sneyet.
we would camp across and upland from 'Back Riverbank' (hill on west side of Chistochina River, three or four miles above the mouth).

Cu yihwts'en 'unggat 'ungga 'Uzdledi T'aax dze' ye nits'enaes.
Again, upland from there, upland from 'Beneath the One that Melts' (hill 3340' west of Chistochina River), there we stopped.

Xona tsuugi ka ni'aelts'elaes.
Then we set traps for marten.

Yihwts'en xona tsuugi ts'eghaax.
Then we killed marten.

K'alii sut'e'i tsuugi ts'esghaaghe.
We did not catch really fine marten.

Yihwts'en xona ts'inats'etnaesi
Starting out again from there,

dangge Snuu Na' 'ungga Snuu T'aa yet ninats'etnaes.
upland from 'Brushy Creek' (Sinona Creek) we would stop up at 'Brushy Headwaters' (head of Sinona Creek).

Yihwts'en Snuu Na' 'unggadze ts'inats'edel.
Then we would come back down from 'Brushy Creek'.

'Unggat 'Uzdledi T'aax dze' tsuugi gha 'sdelts'ix.
We would stay for marten above 'Beneath the One that Melts'.

Yihwts'en una' ts'inats'edel dze' ucaegge nanaa 'unggat.
From there we would come back out across and upland from the river mouth.

Tsiis T'edze' Caegge yet ts'inats'edel.
We would come out from 'Blue Ochre Mouth'.

Yihwts'en nggase' naat nggase' ts'int's'edel nanaa 'unii.
From there we came back out across and upriver by a different route.

Neghak'ae yet nints'edeli.
We stopped back at our home.

Du' yihwts'en xona nunyeggaay gha ni'aelts'elaes nanaats'en.
Then from there, then we set traps for fox across (the river).

Nanggat Ketne'aay
Up from 'The One Standing by Itself' (hill 2531' south of Chistochina).

down where you see that hill, Ketne'aay, 'The One Standing by Itself'.

ye daniits'en tes ta 'utgge nunyeggaay kaen' kadešt'aan xu tkut'e'.
there on the upriver side up among the hills there are many fox dens.

Du' xuta 'ael ts'elaax nunyeggaay gha.
Right there we kept traps for fox.

Xey xuk'a 'ael ts'elaax, you know.
We had traps (out) all winter, you know.

Xuk'a nunyeggaay ts'eghaax yidi ukol xa' da.
We kept killing foxes, so many of them.

Dzaxdze' nunyeggaay c'ghile'.
There were so many fox.

C'gax c'a su c'ghile'.
There were rabbits, too.

K'alii 'unse dilaale.
They (skins) were not worth much.

Cross fox dollar-fifty c'ghile'.
A cross fox was (worth) one-fifty (\$1.50).

Red fox (was worth) one dollar.

Niduuy du' two-fifty dighile'.
Lynx (was worth) two-fifty (\$2.50).

'Ele' sut'e' k'a udicaaghe' c'ilaale.
Nothing was very expensive.

Belzaaze' 'ae' naghalsaege.
Money was really scarce.

Yihwts'en su xona store gaa nikults'et.
Then a store was established here.

Naniit ghaay cut off, you know, vedu' Tsiis T'edze' Caegge ts'en' tene duu nae'.
Upriver at the delta, at the cut off, you know, right there where the trail goes upriver from 'Blue Ochre Mouth' (mouth of Chistochina River).

Yeldu' nilghaay negha nikults'et.
Then we got a store.

Yet xona k'adii hwghaaghe kughile' sii c'a tiy idadenelnende.
That was not long ago, after I had lived a long time.

Yehu' ile' na'sdelyiis udesnen' koley.
Then we would give him fur.

Ye hwdetaey' nec'ootket ta.
We were paid just a small amount.

C'aan t'ae' hwdighitsigi.
Food was really cheap.

C'aan laneltsigi dollar-fifty nighile'.
A whole sack of flour was a dollar-fifty.

Begin ce'e laltsigi ce'i duugh nelbedzi yehu' dollar twenty-five, dollar-fifty ghile'.
A whole slab of bacon this wide was a dollar twenty-five, (or a) dollar-fifty.

T'ae' dighitsigi.
Things were really cheap.

Yu' yu' ni'sdelyaayi sel ni'sdelyaayi ts'iidze t'asel udi'aan gaani.
Clothing, clothes that we wore, shoes and these called denim pants,

yii su six bits 'el ghile'.
they cost six bits (\$.75).

Dghaec ta ldu' yii c'a six bits, dollar c'a.
Coats, too, were six bits (or a) dollar.

Some four bits ta ghile'.
Some were four bits (\$.50).

T'ae' dighitsigi.
Everything was cheap.

(3)

Nggat Katl'abese' gha yet yii cu 'sneyel.
We would camp up from 'Back Riverbank' (hill on west bank of Chistochina River).

Yihwts'en xona 'unggat Nataghilen Na' yet cu 'sneyel.
From there upland to 'Creek That Water Flows Down' (East Fork of Chistochina River)
there, too, we would camp.

Yet cu luk'ece'e una' talax.
King salmon spawn there.

Luk'ece'e ts'eldiil yet.
We eat king salmon there.

Yihwts'en xona ngga 'unggat tez'aan.
Up from there is a fishtrap.

Nangge Nataghilen Na' ugha Tez'aani K'ae.
Up from 'Creek That Water Flows Down' is 'Fishtrap Hole' (fish camp on East Fork).

'Ahaan.
Yes.

Tez'aani K'ae, yeah.
'Fishtrap Hole', yeah.

Duu ts'en Tsiis T'edze' Na' ngge' 'stedel Ledadlende.
From here we would go up from 'Blue Ochre River' to 'Where Streams Join' (confluence of Middle Fork and Chistochina River).

(Someone asked) "You want to ride a horse?"³

Du' yihwts'en 'unggat Tsiis Na' leke'udghidlende tiy 'sdałts'iix.
Then from there we stayed a long time at 'Ochre River' (Chisna River) where the streams join.

Yii c'a Tsiis Na'.
That is 'Ochre River'.

Yihwts'en tiy utl'aa hwnelt'e'i sut'ae Tsiis T'edze' Na'.
From there 'Blue Ochre River' has many headwater streams.

Yihwts'en 'unggat Tsiis Na' kanaa 'utsiit
From there above 'Ochre River', across and by the river

T'aghes Nuu Na' yu c'a kugha le'udghelen.
'Cottonwood Island Creek' (west fork of Chistochina River) flows in.

Yii c'a uluu' c'ilaen.
It has a glacier.

Yihwts'en Tsiis Na' ngge' ye uluu' kol.
Up 'Ochre River' (Chisna River) there is no glacier.

Tsiis Na' ('Ochre River') big creek, you know, big river.

Yihwts'en xona Tsiis T'edze' Na' xona 'unggat Slate Creek.
From there above 'Blue Ochre River' is Slate Creek.

Nts'e xona koht'aene k'e 'eli kudziile?
How come it (Slate Creek) is not named in Ahitna?⁴

Yihwts'en xona 'unggu naane kets'enaesde, Ggax Kutl'aa
From there, then we go up and across, to 'Rabbit Headwaters' (upper Gakona River)

³ Adam Sanford does not explain further, but this seems to be a reference to an encounter with miners going toward Slate Creek.

⁴ Slate Creek is one of the few larger streams in Ahitna country that has an English name and no remembered Ahitna name.

Ggax Kuluu' c'a yet nits'enaes.
and we stop at 'Rabbit Glacier' (Gakona Glacier).

Yihwts'en k'alii sut'e' 'sdelts'iix xu.
Beyond there we did not stay very comfortably.

Tsaani yaen' c'elaex.
There are just brown bears there.

Yii yaen' xu natel'as.
Only they roam around there.

Yii yaen' sut'e' li'i uts'e' ts'ehwdil'aayi.
We did not bother them much.

Yihwts'en xona 'unaane 'stenaes ts'en' Tanen'dalyaade.
From there, then we would go across from 'Land between the Waters' (the Alaska Range at the head of the Gakona River).

Xutah fu'stediil.
We would go among (mountains).

Yihwts'en da'endze' dileni yi tl'aa ts'enaes.
From there we came to the head of a stream flowing over to the other side.

Tsiis Na' keniide.
They call it 'Ochre River' (McCallum Creek or College Creek into Delta River).

Dghilaay nelnaes.
The mountain is tall.

Lan'a 'el nelnaes.
It is very tall.

Yii it'aax tsene ts'idinileni, gha yet Tsiis Na'.
It flows out from beneath it, that 'Ochre River'.

Tsiis Dghilaaye' su tiy dghilaay tiy nilaen.
'Ochre Mountain' (Cony Mountain above Gulkana Glacier) is really quite a mountain.

Oh, high hill, you know.

T'ae' ts'abaeli kede'aay su k'ent'ae dghilaay.
That mountain is like a standing spruce tree.

Ba'aadze du' Ketsiigi Na' ba'aadze' dze' udi'aande sunt'ae.
On the other side is the place called 'Yellow River' (possibly Camwell Creek).

Una' 'el tuu kol.
Its creek has no water.

Naak yaen' ut'aghi'aa xu.
Only a sandbar extends beneath it (mountain).

Cu dangge Slate Creek Na', Tsiis Na', Ketsiigi Na', ye c'a 'alk'ek'a kudzii.
Notice that up there Slate Creek, 'Ochre Creek', 'Yellow Creek', they are similarly named.

Yet sghanaat una' 'utsene ts'its'enaes.
Across from there we came out by the (Delta) river.

Ba'eni Dzel Ghatgge 'Eni ba'aat Dafuu'itsaakden yet nits'enaes.
Over at 'Pass between the Mountains' (Isabel Pass), out at 'Where Glacier Blocks an Area' (Black Rapids Glacier), there we stop.

Yihwts'en Una' Ketsitne'aay Na'
From there at 'Its Creek Has a Head against It' (possibly Miller Creek)

yedu' 'ae' ts'abaeli k'e su k'ent'aede yet Una' Ketsitne'aay Na'.
it is (steep), just like a spruce, that 'Its Creek Has a Head against It'.

Ts'abaeli nindez'aay k'e sunt'aede nanuux 'utggat xu tkut'ae.
They (mountains) are standing like spruce (possibly Rainbow Ridge) upriver and alsoe there.

K'elt'aeni daagge'.
They are comparable to K'elt'aeni (Mount Sanford).

Yu 'aaxdze' nits'enaes.
We stopped beneath them.

Xuxu dghilaay!
Oh, those mountains!

Dghilaay tats'enaes ba'eni Dzel Ghatgge 'Eni.
We went among the mountains on the other side at 'Pass between the Mountains' (Isabel Pass).

Yihwts'en ba'aat Kuultaan Na' yii c'a duughe k'e dghilaay nimilaa.
From there out at 'Creek Where Canyon Goes In' (Bear Creek) the mountains extend out to there.

Gaa Kuultaan Na' yii c'a nits'enaes.
We stopped here at 'Creek Where Canyon Goes In'.

Yihwts'en 'unggu denyiit.
From there is a canyon.

Denyii ta yaen' 'sdalts'iix.
We just stayed in the canyon.

Lts'ii, lts'ii hwditnes dze' lan'a lts'ii ta su.
The wind, the wind kept on (blowing), a really strong wind.

Saen ta xona koht'aene hwdlii talil, you know.
People can freeze during the summer, you know.

Xona ts'utsae ba'eni Dzel Ghatgge 'Eni tene kughile'.
Well, long ago there was a trail through 'Pass between the Mountains'.

Yihwts'en xona Ba'aadi Nene' K'et.

From there (it went) to 'On the Outside Land' (the Tanana River Valley).

Tae' Luu Tahwdzaeye' kiifnii yii dze' tsene tah 'sneyel.

At where they call it 'Heart among the Glaciers' (Donnelly Dome), there we camp by the river.

Yi det'ax tsene ta 'sneyel.

We camped at the pass on the river side.

Yihwts'en xona 'utsit nts'e kol t'aen?

From there, then toward the water, how can it (place name) be absent?⁵

Nizaay Caegge.

(It is) 'Gravel Mouth' (the mouth of Jarvis Creek).

Nizaay Caegge nits'enaes.

We stopped at 'Gravel Mouth'.⁶

Yihwts'en Idu' xona xona Ba'aaxe Tuu' Ba'aaxe Tuu' baaghe ye ts'its'edel.

From there, then 'Outside Water' (the Tanana River) the shore of 'Outside Water', there we came out.

Yedu' xona ba'aaxe hwt'aene i:ts'edel.

There we came among the Tanana River peoples.

Xoxo xona koht'aene una' c'ghile' Ba'aaxe Tuu'.

Oh, there were people there along 'Outside Water'.

Yetdu' xona koht'aene 'el 'sdalts'iix.

There we stayed among the people.

Xayde ba'aadze xuc'a' na'stedel.

We left them in the winter.

Nildenta t'ae' nse'dze' xuk'a na'stedel.

Sometimes we would return later (toward spring).

Duugh du' tsa' dzaghe' dilcax xu duugh nats'adel.

There that 'beaver ear' (a plant, wintergreen, pyrola sp.) was only so big when we were returning.

(We would) walk all the way.

Ggaal kae cu gaank'e 'sneyiil ba'aadze.

Coming back from over there we camped again using snares.

⁵ Adam cannot immediately recall the Ahtna place name.

⁶ The camp at the mouth Jarvis Creek, near the modern Fort Greely gate, was one of the locations used by Chief Jarvis, an Ahtna from Paxson Lake who was married to a Tanana River woman. Jarvis became chief of the Goodpaster-Salcha band in 1903 and was murdered in the Delta area in 1913. Accounts of Chief Jarvis' life are to appear in Mishler (forthcoming).

Ye kudesaat xu sutkut'aede Dzel Ghatgge 'Eni.
That is quite a long distance, that 'Pass between the Mountains' (Isabel Pass).

K'adii su car 'el kudildiye xona.
Now with a car it has become a short distance.

(4)

'Udaat Sngadaxi daagge yedu' yedu' den nisiltaen.
Downriver, upon 'Sliding' (hill on Copper River near mouth of Sanford River), right there
I was born.

Yet ts'insyaade sust'aede.
That is where I came from.

Yihwts'en Dzaan Yighilende yet xa'k'a k'ensdzet.
From there to 'Where It Flows into Murky Water' (site near mouth of Gulkana River),
there I grew up.

Xona k'a duu snaan unaan nadaat Ts'itael Caegge yet hdaghalts'e'.
Then my mother's mother stayed at 'Mouth of River That Flows Straight'.

Xona snaan, she come.
Then my mother, she come.

Denaan ts'e' natesdyaa.
She went back to her mother.

Xugha na'idyya naene c'a naene dents'eltsigi.
When she returned to them, we were small.

T'ae' dghaltsigi.
I was really small.

Well, C'ulc'ena' ngge' 'utggu lu'snidaetl, C'ulc'ena' ngge'.
Well, we traveled up from 'Tearing River' (Gulkana River), up from 'Tearing River'.

Yihwts'en 'unggat Taltsoh Caegge yet cu neghak'ae kughile' a little while.
From there, up at 'Brown Water Mouth' (Telsona Creek) our home was there for a little
while.

Yet c'a luk'ae gha yet 'sdaalts'iix.
We used to stay there for salmon.

Tsabaey, tsabaey gha 'sdaalts'iix.
Trout, we used to stay for trout.

Yihwts'en saene tene ngge' tanats'edel.
From there we used to go upland on the summer trail.

'Unggu sii c'a t'ae' dghaltsigi.
Up there I was very small.

Cu xona sta' 'iine nen'ta tene kughif'aen'.
My father's people had a trail out into the country there.

'Unggu xona dghilaay tanats'edel.
Then we used to go up into the mountains.

Tseles gha batkot'aen.
That is a place for ground squirrels.

Tseles hghilkaan' dze' hwt'aene koht'aene su nen'ta kiigha dghataen'i.
They liked the taste of ground squirrels and all the people went into the country for them.

Tseles yii gha tc'et'uux.
Snares were set for the ground squirrel.

Tseles nkeltaes du' yedi'i ggaay c'a.
They harvested ground squirrels and other little things.

Udzih c'a hzelghaes, yii kae xu nen' tah.
They killed caribou, too, (living) on that out in the country.

Naene sut'e' k'a 'ele' ugheli kulaele nen' kughile' ts'utsae.
We did not have very good country long ago.

Tseles c'ghile'.
There were ground squirrel.

Udzih c'ghile'.
There were caribou.

Deniigi c'a kughistle'.
There weren't any moose.

Nen' ghilcaaxdze' one or two k'a ghidaax.
In the entire country only one or two were staying.

Ts'elk'ey k'a nen' k'e ghidaax.
One was staying in the country.

Yii c'a nakiltaesi 'el hzelghaes.
If they found it, they would kill it.

K'adii su deniigi c'ezdlaen.
Recently moose have appeared.

K'adii da'atnae 'elaen xu 'adii deniigi nen' k'et c'ezdlaen.
Now, when I am an old man, now moose have appeared in the country.

Yii c'a u'el 'estnesi.
I know that.

Du' xona yihwts'en C'ulc'ena'
Now from there, up from 'Tearing River'

'unggat c'etsiy tnaey delts'iide k'adii kayax kuzdlaen.
where the white people stay, now there is a village.

C'etsiy tnaey gha tseh su 'utsiit Dzaan Yighilende ye kughak'ae kughile'.
Before the white people down at 'Where It Flows into Murky Water' (near mouth of
Gulkana River), that was their home.

Yet su nitsiil 'el hghila'.
There they had winter houses.

Yet'aax hdaalts'iix xayde.
They stayed in there in the winter.

Yihwts'en naene xona Ts'itael Caegge kanats'esdaetl.
From there, then we went back up to 'Mouth of River That Flows Straight'.

Stsucde 'iine gha nats'idaetl.
We returned to my grandmother's people.

Ts'itael Caegge kanaa 'uniit sdaghene sdates 'ene tighita'.
Upriver and across from 'Mouth of River That Flows Straight', at a point a trail went over
a portage.

Kanaa 'uniit xona yax ce'e kughile'.
Across and upriver was a big house.

Ts'utsae hwnaxe', nitsiil ye ghi'a'.
An old-style house, a winter house was there.

Yet nats'adel xayde.
We went back there in the winter.

Yet'aax xayde 'sdalts'iix.
We stayed in there in the winter.

Du' yihwts'en duu daadze' na'stedel dze' xona gaa duu
Then from there, coming from downriver, we came back around here.

duu 'udaadze 'unii Sdzedi Caegge yet 'sneyel.
upriver here at 'Sdzedi Mouth' (mouth of Caribou Creek), there we would camp.

Yet Taltsogh Caegge cu yet cu nats'edel.
Then we came back again to 'Brown Water Mouth' (Tulsona Creek mouth).

Yet ts'enevel Taltsogh Caegge, Sdzedi Caegge.
We camped there at 'Brown Water Mouth' and at 'Sdzedi Mouth'.

Yihwts'en xona Bancdidaasi Tayene' dae' ts'en ta basnighiyel.
From there at 'Straight Stretch That Caribou Cross' (on Copper River near mile 29 of Tok
Cutoff) we camped on this side.

Yihwts'en nanaa 'uniit Ts'itu' K'et Ts'itu' K'et dinats'adel.

From there across and upriver to 'On Major River' (fish camp near Chistochina) we come back to 'On Major River'.

That fish camp over there.

K'adii tuk'ae gha 'sdelts'iix.

Now we stay there for salmon.

Yet Ts'itu' K'et hwdighi'a'.

That is called 'On Major River'.

Yihwts'en naniit Di'idaedl Na' xona kanaa uc'aadze' kiidileni.

From there upriver to '(Fish) Go in River' (Indian River) then across from there a stream flows in.

Dae' snaf'ii nahwdelzes.

That name has slipped my mind.

Yet kanaa uc'aadze' yet c'a kayax kughile'.

Across from there also there was a village.

Kanaa uc'aadze' Ts'ensdzedi Na'.

Across from there is 'We Turn Back Unsuccessfully Creek' (creek into Copper River opposite mouth of Indian River).

Yihwts'en xona ts'inats'etnaes.

From there then we would start out again.

Nuu T'aax Dezdlaade yet 'snighiyel.

We camped there at 'Objects beneath the Islands' (on Copper River near Cobb Lakes).

Du' yihwts'en ts'inats'etnaesi Baa Łaets Cii 'snighiyel.

Starting out from there we camped at 'Gray Sand Point' (point near Slana).

Yihwts'en xona 'unii Uk'et Nilk'ehwdetsedzi k'et 'snighiyel.

From there, then we camped upriver at 'On It Dry Wood Is Tangled Together' (point on Copper River on south bank above Slana).

Ye 'snighiyel dze' Nataelde kanats'adel.

We camped there and we came back up to 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulnetas).

Yihwts'en dangge xona nen' nen' ta teni.

Up from there is a trail out into the country.

Sez'ae 'iinn yet hdaghalts'e' 'iinn.

My uncle's people stayed there.

Ne'el nen' tahtadel.

They would go out into the country with us.

Utgga Ts'abaeli K'edi k'e yet niidentah 'snighiyel.
Sometimes we camped up on 'The One with Spruce on It' (hill east of Batzulnetas).

Unggat k'eseh, k'eseh 'snighiyel.
Up at the lake outlet (of Tanada Lake), we camped at the outlet.

Yet 'ungga Men Dileni Caegge yet c'a yi na' 'snighiyel.
We also camped at that creek there, 'Mouth of the One That Flows into the Lake' (creek into southeast shore of Tanada Lake).

Yihwts'en xona, xona dghilaay nits'enaes.
From there then, then we stopped at the mountains.

Xona nilk'ae ta dghilaay t'ae' dghilaay yaen' ta.
Then there are mountains on both sides, only mountains.

Unggat Tanaade Bene' nidini'a'de
They extend to 'Moving Water Lake' (Tanada Lake)

duu yehwts'en xona dangge Tsec'elggodi Tl'aa.
up to 'Rock Is Chipped Headwaters' (upper Jacksona Creek).

Xona 'stenaes xona debae ggaay kae.
We went there (living) on small sheep.

Debae ggaay sut'e' k'alii debae kulaele xu.
The small sheep weren't very good.

Not much (game) in there, you know.

Xona ye k'a Tsec'elggodi Tl'aa ts'eghinaes.
Then we came out from 'Rock Is Chipped Headwaters'.

Yihwts'en xona kana'sghinaes.
From there we would turn back.

Gha yet 'unggat huu gha, huu gha hw ts'e' kudeldiyede kana'sghidel.
From there to the glacier (Nabesna Glacier), we turned back a short distance from the glacier.

Katsuughe yaen' Tsae T'aax 'unaa yet c'a 'ungga huu gha yet c'a ts'ekaltiin'.
In the area by the river at 'Beneath the Rock' (Wait Creek Pass) they had a trail going across and out to the glacier.

Nabaes Na' yihwts'en k'a xona 'unggadze nen' tiisde ts'ents'adel.
'Nabaes River' (Nabesna River), from there then we come back from the uplands when the ground freezes.

Debae gha saen hdaalts'iix xu.
They stayed there during the summer for sheep.

Dae' tkat'aeni kae.
That is what they lived on.

Nen' k'e 'sdaghalts'e'.
We stayed out in the country.

(5)

Tae' negha hwdighitiy'.
It was very hard for us.

K'adii c'a xona 'se'ezyen dze' 'el tkudyaak.
Now it has happened that we eat well.

Is'utsaede t'ae' negha hwdighitiy'.
In the past it was really hard for us.

Ghaye nts'e t'kol'aen ta c'etsen' ggaay 'el nifts'e' k'ali koht'aene gha c'ighila' kole.
No matter what they did with a little meat, there was not much to share among the people.

Koht'aene gha k'ali c'ilaale.
The people did not have much.

Kiyaani kae nen' k'e hdaghalts'e'.
They lived on the land with what they could eat.

Nen' k'e tuhminidaek.
They went around the country in poverty.

Du' xona xona k'adii c'etsiy tnaey 'une nen' kazdaetl xona c'aan 'el dghitaey'.
Well, now, now that the white people have come into the country, there is enough food.

Xona lzaasi 'el c'ezdlaen xu xoxo k'adii lzaasi k'adii c'a ukol koht'aene.
Then money appeared, but oh, now the (Ahtna) people have no money.

Koht'aene ta'itsaak tkudyaak.
It (money) came among the people.

C'etsiy tnaey xona k'aatle k'a kezdaen.
They (the Ahtnas) have almost become white people.

C'etsiy tnaey kezdaen.
They have become white people.

18
Natael Nenn'
The Batzulnetas Country

Katie John

In this travel narrative Katie John mentions 83 place names and 44 different places. Slana, Suslota, and Batzulnetas are the home bases. The segments are 1) from Slana to Mentasta; 2) from Suslota to Mentasta; 3) from Batzulnetas to the head of Copper River and Tanada Lake, then looping into the Nabesna drainage and back to Batzulnetas and Suslota; and 4) the Slana area and the eastern slope of Mount Sanford.

(1)

Netsehtah koht'aenn 'iinn gaa nen' k'et tuxac'ehdelyaayi gha luhnidaetl.
Before us, the people on the land here used to go hunting in groups.

Mendaes hwt'aenn 'iinn
The 'Shallows Lake' (Mentasta) people

Bes Ce'e hwt'aenn 'iinn 'el nilt'aay kadel datsiit Kolgiisde.
and the 'Big Bank' (New Suslota on Suslota Creek) people used to meet down at 'Kolgiis' (Bear Valley Creek).

Kolgiis Na' datsiit ts'en duu yihwk'e nilt'aay kadel ts'en
They used to meet by the river on this side of 'Kolgiis Creek' and

yihwts'en danggedze Mendaes hwt'aenn 'iinn tuxac'ehdelyiis dzen 'uka.
the 'Shallows Lake' people used to hunt for muskrat upland from there.

Bes Ce'e hwt'aenn 'iinn datsen.
The 'Big Bank' people (used to hunt) down below (on the lower Slana River).

Nilghakedelde nilts'en' xu' nilehdetniix.
When they met together they would talk to each other like this.

"Dae' ts'en nts'eniix naxacdghostiis," nilehdetniix.
"I'm going to hunt on this side, I tell you," they would tell each other.

"Agha," nilehdetniix ts'en' xu' k'et'ix.
"Okay," they would tell each other and it would happen like that.

K'ali den Sasiuuggu' hwt'aenn 'iinn k'ali Mendaes hwt'aenn 'iinn
Neither the 'Small Salmon' (Suslota) people nor the 'Shallows Lake' people

xunen' ka'iyaa ts'en'.
would go on up into the country.

Yae' dzen li'i kesghüige.
Up that way they couldn't kill muskrat.

Nilghakedel ts'en' xu' nilehdetniix gha' yaen' koht'aenn 'iinn xu' dghat'aen'.
They met together and the people did just what they told each other.¹

(2)

Datsuux yae' igha yanidan'a ts'en koht'aenn 'iinn tene kulaende.
Down by the river there are Ahtna trails from the ancient times.

'Utsii Nataelde ts'en' k'a 'utsiidze tene kulaen ts'en'
From down at 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulnetas) there are trails going up from the river

Sasluuggu', Bes Ce'e kedi'aan.
to where it is called 'Small Salmon' (Old Suslota), and 'Big Bank' (New Suslota on Suslota Creek).²

K'adii yedu' Suslota kehdi'aan.
Now they call that Suslota.

Bes Ce'e c'a kedi'aan ye kuhwk'e kekudel ts'en'
They would pass what is called 'Big Bank' and

'utsiidze tediil ts'en', all tene niftankuz'aa.
coming up from below, all the trails would meet.

Duu koht'aenn 'iinn nenatseh ts'en' koht'aenn tene.
Here are the people's trails, the people before us (our ancestors).

Ngga Mendaesde yet gaa kekudel ts'en' hdeke' kaen' tene kulaende.
They would pass by here upland at 'Shallows Lake Place' (Mentasta) on foot where the trail is.

Sii c'a sc'aen ghale' xu' funesyaa ts'en' yii gha' 'el estnes xu tene.
I, too, went there when I was a child and that is how I know the trails.³

Five years old 'elaen xu funesyaa sta' snaan 'iinn 'el.
When I was five years old I went there with my mother and father.

Xu tusnidaetl ts'en' all 'utsiidze tene koht'aenn 'iinn tene sii c'a 'el 'estnes.
We traveled there and I know all the trails, the people's trails, coming from below.

Datsuux Tlogh Ingetnaay danaa Bes Ce'e ts'en' tene kehwdi'aade.
Down below at 'Grass that Moves' (place on trail from Slana River to Suslota) a trail meets across at 'Big Bank' (New Suslota).

¹ Territorial boundaries were recognized even between Suslota and Mentasta and agreements were made about where groups were to hunt.

² See Reckord 1983:191-197 on the sequence of villages on Suslota Creek and Suslota Lake.

³ Katie John's statement here serves to refute the hapless Lt. Joseph C. Castner, who journeyed through Ahtna territory and was saved by the Goodpaster Indians from starvation in 1898. He stated, "There are so few Indians, and they travel so little, that practically no trails worthy of the name are made by them" (Castner 1984:72).

Yet c'a T'ogh Ingelnaay kedí'aa.
That place is called 'Grass That Moves'.

Ye 'ungge c'ena' Stí'aa Na' ngge' htediil ts'en' xatl kaen' xey tene.
Upland from the river there, they would go up from 'Rear River' (Slana River) with sleds on a winter trail.

'Unggat Xoos Ghadi Zdlaa keniide,
Up at where they call it 'Horse Wagons Are There' (historic Eagle Trail between Gukana and Mentasta).

ye danggasts'en ta xona danggedze dae' tic'akedel.
they would go out into the woods on the upland side or down below.

Ba'aa ye Tak'ez'aann gha def'ax 'en tah 'en tah tene kughile' ts'en'.
Out in the open at 'Object in the Valley' (hill at Indian Pass), by the pass a trail went through the pass.

Xu'en ta kakedel ts'en' bayggat Tes Taa Menn' 'ehdidel ts'en'.
They would go up and over to the other side and they would come out below 'Lake beneath the Hill' ("Fifteenmile Lake," north of Indian Pass).

Tes Taa Menn' Tes xatl 'el kekudel ts'en'.
They would pass on sleds by 'Hill of Lake beneath the Hill' (hill near "Fifteenmile Lake").

'Unaa Tes Taa Menn' ts'edinileni yii yii na' ngge' kakedel.
Across where a stream flows from 'Lake beneath the Hill' they would go upland there on that creek.

Yihwts'en 'unaann htedel ts'en' Taggos Menn' 'ehdidel ts'en'.
From there they would go across and they would come to 'Swan Lake' (lake north of "Fifteenmile Lake").

Taggos Menn' Tes c'a kekudel ts'en'.
They would pass by 'Swan Lake Hill' (hill between lake and Slana River).

Yihwts'en xona K'ekoteni yii.
Then from there to 'On the Flats' (flat between lakes and Slana River).

K'ekoteni k'et naann tene kughile', xatl tene, xey tene.
At 'On the Flats' there is a trail across the way, a sled trail, a winter trail.

Yet bayggat xona Stí'aa Na' keniide Nacox'ax keniide
Below there, then, at what is called 'Rear River' (Slana River), at where they call it 'Slough' (slough on west side of Slana River near mile 70 of Richardson Highway)

gha ye tah kakedel ts'en' 'ungge Nacox'ax Na' ngge' htedel ts'en'
they come there and they go upland on 'Slough Creek' and

'unggat xona Stí'aa Na' kadighilende kakedel ts'en'.
they go up above where 'Rear River' flows up and out.

Yihwts'en ngge' xona htediil ts'en' Mendaesde xutsiidze de
From there they would go upland and from below to 'Shallows Lake Place' (Mentasta)

dae' Mendaes Caegge yetah xona ket'akedel ts'en'
they would pass 'Shallows Lake River Mouth' (where Mentasta Lake outlet meets Slana River) and

Mendaesde xona tak'ae yekedel.
they would come into the valley at 'Shallows Lake Place' (Old Mentasta).

(3)

Datsii Nataelde kughile'e gha nahwgholnigi.
I'm going to tell about down below at 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulmetas).

Nataelde kedra'ade yet gaa.
There, where it is named 'Roasted Salmon Place'.

Koht'aenn 'iinn tseh koht'aenn ye nitezdaetl ts'en' tseh Cet'aenn 'ehwdil'aande.
Prior to the Ahtnas' arrival there, it was originally discovered by Cet'aenn, 'The Tailed Ones'.⁴

Cet'aenn hghighaande k'ets'ende, koht'aenn 'iinn gha yet tak'ae kultsin ts'en'
After they killed the Cet'aenn, the Ahtnas made a home there and

luk'ae gha ye koht'aenn ninidaetl.
people came there for salmon.

Ye gaa duu hwghaagh da sii sta' snaan 'iinn 'el tah yet nihmidaetl ts'en'
Recently my father came there with my mother and

ghat yet k'enesdzet sii.
that is where I grew up

Kadaat kudeldiyede Natael Na' kedilende yet du' stsiye Billy yet ghida'.
Nearby at the next place downriver where 'Roasted Salmon Creek' (Tanada Creek) flows, there my grandfather Billy (Henry) stayed.⁵

Dets'enekae'y' 'el hdaghalts'e'.
They stayed with the children.

Yet luk'ae gha gha yet saenn tah hdelts'iix.
They stayed there during the summer to fish.

Xey tah nahwtetk'asi ts'en', Cet'aan' Hwditsiic xu tkonii ts'en'
In the winter as it turned cold, when it is said 'Leaves Turn Yellow' (late August).

yeta 'ungge ta Ts'itu' T'aa ngge' tah k'enanaelkeldel ts'en' 'ungge.
upland to 'Major River Headwaters' (the country at the head of the Copper River) they go back, moving nomadically into the uplands.

⁴ See chap. 6 on the Cet'aenn and the founding of the village of Nataelde.

⁵ This site is called C'ecaege, 'River Mouth'. See Reckord 1983:203, 206 on sites in the Tanada Creek area.

'Unggat tes Sez'aann xe'edil'aan ye t'aa

*Up there beneath that hill they named 'Heart' (mountain 6580' north of Copper Glacier;
see photo, p. 155)*

ye t'aax ts'en' hdelts'iix ts'en' yihwts'en luxac'ehdelyiis ts'en'
they stayed beneath there and they hunted in groups from there and

debae keghiix gha yet.
they killed sheep there.

Ye 'ungge 'ungge huu gha xu 'el tuhtediil ts'en' debae yaen' c'a xu c'ilaen.
Then they would go around by the (Copper) glacier and only sheep are there.

Udzih c'a kol.
There are no caribou.

Ye xu debae kaen' xuhwgha xey nakedax ts'en'.
They would spend the winter there living on sheep.

Xutah xey hdelts'iix.
They stayed out in the country in the winter.

'Ael 'el kelaax xu.
They had traps set.

Ye xona hwteggguusi ts'en' ta xona ts'enakedel ts'en'
As it became spring there they would come back out and

'utsit yet hdeghak'ae ninakedel.
they would stop again by the river at their home.

Naenn du' kani hwts'en dangge Tanaade Menn' kenide xu
As for us, the next place upriver, up at 'Moving Water Lake' (Tanada Lake)

nenenn' ta kughile' ts'en' kuhtah nen'ta hustedil.
*was our country and there we would go out into the country.**

Nataelde ts'ets'edel ts'en'
We would go from 'Roasted Salmon Place' and

'ungge ta Ts'abael K'edigha xu hwgha kets'udel ts'en'
we would pass by 'By the One with Spruce on It' (hill east of Nataelde) and

'unggat Tanaade gha gha yet tah ts'enevel ts'en'
we would camp up there at 'Moving Water Place' (Tanada Lake outlet) and

ye xanggat Men Dilende yet ta xona yet cu nits'edel.
*we would stop at the next place above at 'Where It Flows into Lake' (creek into Tanada Lake
on southeast shore).*

* Kati John distinguishes Batzulnetas Billy's hunting territory in the Copper Lake upper Copper River areas from his father's country in the Tanada Lake area.

Yet ts'en yihts'en huhtediil ts'en' debae kol ts'en'
They would go out from there and if there were no sheep.

yihwts'en ts'ents'edeli 'el xona Ledidlende tayen nits'edel.
*we started out again from there and then we stopped on the straight stretch of river at
 'Where Streams Join' (Goat Creek).*

Ledidlende yet ta xona debae keghiix.
They killed sheep there at 'Where Streams Join'.

Yii debae 'el ye sdelts'iix.
We stayed there with that sheep.

Yihwts'en xona dangge ta c'ena' ngge' ta kets'edel ts'en' yi c'a xungge kecdilaade.
From there, then upland, as we go on upland, there are names up there.

Ts'akae Ggan Nats'itbaal keniide
Where they call it 'The Thin Lady Was Lowered on a Rope' (creek off Tanada Peak).

ye xu kets'udel ts'en' ye xanggat men, Men Ggaay Ledelyaade
*they pass by there and the lakes up there, 'Little Lakes Connected Together' (lakes at summit
 of Goat Creek and Jacksina Creek).*

gha ye cu xu'en cu kats'edel ts'en'.
there we go up over to the other side.

Ye xu'en xona Tsec'elggodi T'aa keniide ye kets'edel ts'en'
There over to 'Rock Is Chipped Headwaters' (upper Jacksina Creek) we come there and

Tsec'elggodi keniide 'adii du' Jacksina Nondlae 'iinn Jacksina kehdi'aann.
note the white people have named the place called 'Rock Is Chipped' Jacksina.

Gha yet Tsec'elggodi Na' tsen ts'ets'edel.
There at 'Rock Is Chipped Creek' we come out by the stream.

Yets'en' 'utsidze yet Ts'ilt'en' Kats'etses Na' keniide
*Up from the (Nabesna) river to there at what is called 'We Lift Up a Bow Creek'
 (Pass Creek)*.*

yet xu'aadze ta kanats'edel ts'en'.
we come back from the other side.

Ye datsendze stedel ta, xona Tsae T'aax keniide ye cu nits'edel ts'en'.
When we come from below, then we stop at where they call it 'Beneath the Rock' (Wait Creek).

Ye cu debae gha sdalts'iix.
There, too, we would stay for sheep.

*Kate tells the story of this place name:
 They killed one sheep up on the mountain, and it fell down into the steep canyon. They put a rope
 around this woman and lowered her down. She cut the sheep up and they raised it up, gave her
 price. Then they lifted her out.*

* Kate John says that this name describes a very steep place on the mountains where one man would go up and then
 the next one would hand up his bow so that he could be pulled up.

Gha ye ts'en nikenastedel ts'en' xona 'u'aadze Ledidlende ninats'edel.
From there we complete a circle from the other side and stop again at 'Where Streams Join' (Gout Creek).

Gha ye Ledidlende yedu' xona c'etsen' dak'ae xukul'aen'de.
There at 'Where Streams Join', then they kept a meat cache.

Ye ta yedu' xona all nik'aa kulaen ts'en' fuhtediil ts'en'.
There they would go around (hunting) for whatever (meat) was available.

Debae keghiix.
They would kill sheep.

Ye all c'etsen' nihiyikelaes ts'en' ye xona nihi'e nadetseh nankeltiin ts'en'.
They gathered together all that meat and then they would relay it ahead.

Tanaade Menn' gha tene keyelyiis.
They would bring it on the trail to 'Moving Water Lake' (Tanada Lake).

Men Dilende ye cu ninats'enedel ts'en'
We would camp again at 'Where It Flows into Lake' (creek on southeast shore of Tanada Lake) and

Tanaade yet ts'en' Ts'abael K'edigha ninats'enedel.
from 'Moving Water Place' we camped again at 'By the One with Spruce on It'.

Cu Nataelde Kenats'edel.
We got back to 'Roasted Salmon Place' again.

Nataelde yeta xona nints'edel ts'en' ye sdelts'iix.
When we returned to 'Roasted Salmon Place', we stayed there.

Xona nen' detisi 'el' utgge Bes Ce'e ts'en' gge' ta xona nastedel ts'en'.
Then the ground froze and then we returned to 'Big Bank' (New Suslota) up above and

'utgge Bes Ce'e ta kanats'edel ts'en' ye lu nekonagh' 'el kuzdlaa ts'en'.
we went back up to 'Big Bank' and we had houses there.

Yet xona xey nats'edax.
Then we would spend the winter there.

Yihwts'en xona 'ael' 'el sta' 'el snaan' 'el' 'ael' 'el ta xey kelaax.
From there, then my father and mother would set traps during the winter.

hwna xey xu'el nakozet.
while the winter would pass by for them.

Yi ts'en' 'ael' yunyeggaay ta all niltats'en' c'altsil ts'en' tsa' zes nihiyidelaes ts'en'.
In the traps were foxes of all color phases and they gathered together a cache of fur and

xona yi 'el ta xona datsen Stl'aa Caegge ts'en' tsene ta xii'el tadel ts'en'.
then down below to 'Mouth of Rear River' (Slana) they went with it.

'Utsii Stl'aa Caegge hneyel ts'en'
They would camp down by the river at 'Mouth of Rear River' and

yihwts'en 'udaa' Ts'itu' k'et daa' htediil ts'en'
from there they would go downriver on 'Major River' (Copper River) and

'udaa' Tsiiis Tledze' Na' yeta xona tsa' zes 'en 'ehdelaes.
they would sell the fur down at 'Blue Ochre River' (Chistochina).

Ye xu tene xey tene Ts'itu' k'e daa' xey tene kughile'
There the trail, the center trail, went downriver on 'Major River'.

Ye Tsiiis Tledze' Na' yet du' xona tsa' zes 'udetkaetde yet Nondlae zdaade.
Then there at 'Blue Ochre River', there the fur was purchased there where a white man stayed.

Yetah 'en kiidelaesi c'aan kunesi 'el kanakedel.
When they sold it, they obtained food and came back up.

(4)

Gaa Stl'aa Caegge ked'i'aande.
Here is what is called 'Mouth of Rear River' (Slana).

Datgga tes ggaav nez'aan ts'en' Dzii Koley xii'edif'aan.
That little hill up there they named 'The Deaf One' (hill at Slana).

Yii c'a xigha nakalniisi.
They told this about it.

Denae udzii kughistle'e.
A man was dead.

Yen devaagge yen uk'et ni'lnic xulnu.
When he died he was buried on it (hill) they said.²

Yii gha' Dzii Koley kii'edif'aan.
That is why they named it 'The Deaf One'.

Gha yii tes ggaav yii c'a yet'aax ts'en' nisiltaende.
Below that little hill is where I was born.

Gha ye nekonagh' kughile'de.
Our house was there.

Danoxu kugh'i'a'.
It stood a ways upriver.

Gaa duu nondlae 'unsogho ts'en' kezyaann
Here a white man who came from outside

² This man is said to be the first person in the area who was buried underground instead of being cremated, as was the aboriginal practice. He died sometime before the Klusne Lake incident, around 1830.

ven sta' ikonagh' sta' konagh' kughikaet ts'en' yi t'aax daninaa ts'en'
he bought my father's house and he moved in there and

xuk'a'en c'aan 'el'en telaesi gha nikuni'aan ts'en' store nikuni'aan.
he started selling food and he built a store.¹⁰

Yi gha'aat sta' konax nakultsiinde.
My father built another house nearby there.

Yi t'aax c'a nisiltaende.
In there is where I was born.

Datsuux yae' Ts'itu' K'et keniide Ts'itu' ts'idinilen.
Down below there, where they call it 'On Major River', the Copper River flows out.

Stl'aa Caegge daniusts'en kedilen.
'Mouth of Rear River' (mouth of Slana) flows in on the upriver side.

Gaa du' xona Stl'aa Caegge kedi'a'de.
Here, then, it is named 'Mouth of Rear River'.

Danuux yae' Ts'itu' danaasts'en yae'
Up there on the other side of 'Major River'

ts'ek'ey tes ggaay nez'aani Lts'uusi xi'edif'aan.
one little hill sticking up they named 'Pointed One' (hill on south bank of Copper River above Indian River).

'Udaat ighadaat Tsedghaazi Na' ghaa nez'aann du' Nehk'aedi xi'edif'aan.
Downriver, down from 'Rough Rock Creek' (Boulder Creek), a hill stands that they named 'Lookout' (point on Capital Mountain).

Nehk'aedi.
'Lookout'.

Xuk'e kuke'idel ts'en' xuk'e ts'enaexdelts'iix nkohnesi 'uka.
They would go up onto it and they would sit on it looking around for game.

Yi gha' Nehk'aedi xi'edif'aan, Nanuuxu yae' K'elt'aenn t'aax yae'.
This is why they call it 'Lookout', upriver that way beneath 'K'elt'aenn' (Mount Sanford).

¹⁰ Lawrence DeWitt maintained a store at Slana from 1910 to 1937. His wife was Ahtra, and their children, Charlie DeWitt and Lettie Saban, live in the area. Strong (1972, chap. 6:36-37) has a description of DeWitt's store.



Salmon Fisheries

Upper Ahtna Salmon Fisheries

Twenty-one salmon runs on tributaries of the upper Copper River above the Sanford River have been identified. Prior to 1900, salmon were regularly harvested in these places. Each of these runs is named for a side stream or place, and people say that they can discern the differences among fish from the various locations. The prime fishery in the Upper Ahtna area was at *Nitackle*, 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzulnetas), where a prized variety of red salmon was harvested in Tanada Creek. In the summer, the *Tatlahetiam* frequently shared their salmon resources with the Tanana River peoples to the north who lacked good salmon fishing sites.

This map indicates the Copper River tributaries with salmon runs that were traditionally harvested. In addition to these side stream fisheries, many other specific fishing sites on the main river have been identified. The fish runs, according to Bell Joe, Maggie Joe, Fred John, and Katie John, are:

Chistochina area

- 1) *ts itack lungge'*
'flows straight fish'
Sanford River
- 2) *taltsoh lungge'*
'yellow water fish'
Tulsona Creek
- 3) *stzoh lungge'*
'? fish'
'Caribou Creek'
- 4) *kotlen lungge'*
'fish of water flows against a place'
creek south of Boulder Creek
- 5) *tsedghaazi lungge'*
'rough rock fish'
Boulder Creek
- 6) *smu lungge'*
'brushy fish'
Sinona Creek
- 7) *nataghilen lungge'*
'fish of current flows down'
East Fork of Chistochina River, including Mankomen Lake
- 8) *di'idaell lungge'*
'fish swim in (river) fish'
Indian River
- 9) *tsedghaan' lungge'*
'moldy rock fish'
creek north of Boulder Creek

Upper Copper River and Slana River

- 10) *tuk'ce'e lunggu'*
'king salmon fish'
creek south of Drop Creek

- 11) *dzahnni luuggu'*
'rarely mentioned fish'
upper Copper River and Copper Lake
- 12) *natael luuggu'*
'roasted salmon fish'
Tanada Creek and Tanada Lake
- 13) *c'alts'as luuggu'*
'? fish'
Ahtell Creek
- 14) *tak'ats luuggu'*
'spring water fish'
Rufus Creek
- 15) *sa-luuggu'*
'small sockeye'
Suslota Creek and Suslota Lake
- 16) *tsik'ohitsedl luuggu'*
'? small fish'
Suslositna Creek
- 17) *kolgus luuggu'*
'? fish'
Bear Valley Creek
- 18) *mendaes luuggu'*
'shallows lake fish'
Mentasta Outlet and Mentasta Lake
- 19) *c'eggann' ts'enn' luuggu'*
'arm bone fish'
Bone Creek
- 20) *luk'etu' luuggu'*
'fish soup fish'
Granite Creek
- 21) *saas keti itaan luuggu'*
'trail goes on sand fish'
on upper Slana River, three miles above Jack Creek



Chief Luke of Tetlin with his wife, Ellen, in the 1930s. Luke was originally from Mentasta.
Photo courtesy of Molly Galbreath.

19 Mendaes Nenn' Shallows Lake Country

Fred John

In eight separate journeys, Fred John mentions 120 place names and 73 different places. Mentasta is the starting point in all the segments. The eight journeys are as follows: 1) From Mentasta to Bone Creek, over to the Tok River, up the Little Tok River, and back to Mentasta; 2) from Mentasta to Gakona, back to Chistochina, and to Mentasta; 3) from Mentasta to Slana, Gakona, and Gulkana; 4) from Mentasta to Tanacross via the Eagle Trail, and back; 5) from Mentasta to Mineral Lake, Moose Creek, and Little Tok River, over to Indian Pass, and to Mable Creek; 6) from Mentasta to Suslota, Batzulnetas, Tanada Lake, Jacksna, down the Nabesna River to Jack Creek, up to Batzulnetas, then to Suslota, and back to Mentasta; 7) from Mentasta to Trail Creek, down to Tetlin, to Northcreek, back up the Nabesna River to Jack Creek, over to Batzulnetas, and back to Mentasta; 8) from Mentasta over to Dru Tok Creek, back to Slana River and up to the head of the Slana, over to Slate Creek, and back down the Slana River to Mentasta.

(1)

Nahluude stats edelde ts'en

In the tall ice go out and

'ungge Stl'aa Na' 'ungge Ceggaann' Ts'enn' Na' ts'enevel

ice camp upland from 'Rear River' (Slana River) up at 'Armstrong Creek' (Bone Creek)

Yihwts'en kets udel ts'en' Cecelts'etl Na' ts'enevel

From there ice pass by 'Curved Tail Creek' (Jack Creek on upper Slana River) and ice camp

Yet cu ts'edelts'ix

We stay there, too

Yet ts'en cuu ts'enats'edel ts'en' 'ungge 'unggat luu gha ts'en' yet ts'edelts'ix

From there ice start back out again and upland, at a place upland by the (Slana) glacier, there ice stay

Yet cuu c'ekolde, xona 'unggat luu gha

If there is nothing (no game) there, then upland by the glacier

Stl'aa Na' luu gha yet xona nits'edel

then ice stop by 'Rear River' glacier (Slana Glacier)

Yet c'a xona debae c'a tseles 'el yet xona ihssitnes sometime

There ice catch sheep and ground squirrel sometime(s)

Yihwts'en ta xona ma'en stedel Dry Tokyu, Ts'etiy Na'

At times then from there ice go over (the mountains) to Dry Tok Creek and 'Strong River' (Tok River)

Una' Tuu Koley Na' ts'ets'edel.
We go from 'Creek That Has No Water' (Dry Tok Creek).

Yihwts'en 'utsene na' ye xustedel ts'en' Una' Tuu Koley Na'.
And from there we go down by the (Tok) river at 'Creek That Has No Water'.

* Una' Tuu Koley Na' yihts'en 'utsit Ts'etiy Na' Tandzaeygha yet c'a ts'enevel.
*From 'Creek That Has No Water' down at the river we camp at 'Strong River' (Tok River)
 at 'By the Island' (where Eagle Trail crosses Tok River).*

Yet cu ts'enevel.
There, too, we camp.

Yik'ets'en ts'enats'edel 'utsit Tandzaeygha yet sona ninats'edel.
Afterwards, we start out again and then we stop again at 'By the Island'.

Debae hie'ae 'el hie'ae 'el nastelyiis.
We bring back sheep with dogs, with dogs.

Lie'ae ghael' 'el nastetniiis.
We return with dog packs.

Kon'ts'en' ts'edelts'ux.
We stay by the fire.

Yihwts'en ba'aat Tsimiggedzi Taax yet nats'enedel.
*From there, out in the open we camp again at 'Beneath Twisted Head' (mountain 4640'
 west of Mineral Lake).*

Yihwts'en na'aat Tsimiggedzi Taax yet nats'enedel.
From there, out from (and closer to) 'Beneath Twisted Head' we stay another night.

Yihwts'en Tsae Baa Na' nats'enedel.
From there we spend another night at 'Gray Stone Creek' (Bartell Creek).

Tsae Baa Na' yihts'en sona gaa kaek'ae ninats'edel.
Then from 'Gray Stone Creek' to here, we return back home.

Mendaesde nats'edel.
We return to 'Shallows Lake Place' (Mentasta).

(2)

Sacaan Mendaesde hie'ae 'el sona c'aan Nondlae 'inn c'aann' 'ukastedel.
In the morning at 'Shallows Lake Place', with dogs we go for white man's food.

Stl'aa Caegge ts'enevel.
We camp at 'Mouth of Rear River' (Slana).

Yihwts'en sona 'udaat Tsiiis It'edze' Na' yet ts'enevel.
From there then we camp downriver at 'Blue Ochre River' (Chistochma River).

Yet yeldu' xona yeldu' xona c'aan ts'unes.
Then there we get food (at the store).

Yihwts'en yet c'aan kolde xuk'a kets'udel.
Then if there is no food there we just pass by.

'Udaa' Ggax Kuna' yet ta xona c'aan ts'unes.
Sometimes we get food downriver at 'Rabbit River' (Gakona).

Yihts'en nastedel ts'en' Tsiis T'edze' Caegge nats'enedel.
Then we start back and we spend another night at 'Blue Ochre River Mouth' (Chistochina).

Yihwts'en xona Mendaesde nats'edel.
Then we return to 'Shallows Lake Place'.

Ye cuu xona 'udaa' cu c'aan 'uka lustedel tah xay tah.
Thus, then, is how we go for food downriver in the wintertime.

(3)

Xayde yihwts'en 'udaa' c'a, c'ena' daa' xatl 'el stedel ts'en'.
In winter also downriver, we start out down the (Copper) river with sleds.

Yet Baa Laets yet kets'udel.
We pass by 'Gray Soil' (site on north bank of Slana River just above Slana).

Yeldu' Luk'ee'e Na' lates.
Then at 'King Salmon Creek' (creek from south below Drop Creek) is a portage.

Is'odghaan' Na' c'a kets'udel.
We pass by 'Moldy Creek' (creek into Copper River from the south), too.

Yihwts'en xona 'udaa' c'ena' kestedel ts'en' xona 'udaat Nil'axuni'aade,
From there we go downriver on the river and then at 'Where Points Extend in Opposite Directions' (site opposite mouth of Boulder Creek).

yet koht'aenn hdelts'iide, yen 'iinn' 'el nats'eneyel.
where Ahlnas used to live, we would spend a night with them.

Yihwts'en cuu ts'inats'edel 'udaa'.
From there we started out again downriver.

Xona 'udaat Mancdidaaz Tayen'et
Then down at 'Straight Stretch That Caribou Cross' (on Copper River opposite mile 29 of Tok Cutoff)

'udaat Taltsogh Na' yet kets'udel.
we pass by 'Yellow Water Creek' (Tulsana Creek).

'Udaa' ts'en' Ts'itael Na' yic'a kets'udel.
Downriver, then we pass by 'River That Flows Straight' (Sanford River).

Yihwts'en xona Ggax Kuna'den, koht'aenn hdelts'ii 'iinn gha dats'edel.
From there, then at 'Rabbit River Place' (Gakona) we come in where the people stay.

Yet xu'el ts'enevel.
We camp there with them.

Yihts'en xona xucu hwts'ents'edel cu 'udaa'.
From there we start out again downriver.

'Utggu c'itsiy tnaey tene kultsiin ts'en' yets'en' stedel.
Up above we start out there where the white people made a road (Richardson Highway).

'Udaa' C'ulcena' yet c'a ts'enevel.
Then we camp there at 'Cutting River' (Gulkana).

(4)

Dan'a ts'en' snakaey ts'ilaende xona ma'en ts'ets'edel.
In the past when we were children then we came out from over (the mountains).

Nexon snakaey 'iinn xona c'edzes gha good time Tanacrossing t'ae' kunetniic xughi'e'.
We kids used to have a really good time at dances at Tanacross.

Is'akaey 'iinn 'el hdaghalts'e' ts'en' records 'el 'ecdaldlii' ts'en' sc'eldziis.
They stayed there with the women and records were played and we used to dance.

Yii gha xona ma'en Christmas ts'en' stedel.
In this way we went over there for Christmas.

Gaa hts'en stedel ts'en', Ba'at Men Tac'iltende gha yet
We started out from here and, out at 'Game Trails Go among Lakes' (Mineral Lake) there

konax ggaay kughi'a'.
a little house was standing.

Yet ts'enevel.
We camped there.

Yihwts'en ma'en sacaan ma'en cuu stedel ts'en'.
From there to the other side, in the morning we started to the other side and.

Let'aes Ggaay Na' Let'aes Ce'e Na' yet ts'enevel.
at 'Little Let'aes Creek'¹ (Little Clearwater Creek) or at 'Big Let'aes Creek' (Clearwater Creek) there we camped.

Xona sacaan cu ts'inats'edel ba'at Tanacrossing yet xona ts'edel.
Then in the morning we started out again and we came there to the other side to Tanacross.

¹ The meaning of let'aes is uncertain to most Ahtna speakers. In Sakha a similar word refers to tamarack tree. However the tamarack is absent in the Copper River drainage.

Yet xona xu'el ts'edelts'ix vik'ets'en.
Then afterwards we would stay there with them.

Konts'aghade hwlazaann c'a xu'el ts'enevel.
We would stay with them seven to ten days.

Yihwts'en xona ba'aadze cu nastedel ts'en', uk'a Let'aes Ce'e Na' nats'enedel.
Then we would start back from that side and we would camp again at 'Big Let'aes Creek'.

Yihwts'en na'aat Men Tac'iltende yet nats'enedel.
Then we would camp again out at 'Where Game Trails Go among Lakes'.

Yihwts'en xona nats'edel.
Then we came back.

(5)

Xayde gaa ts'ets'edel xatl kaen'.
In winter we leave from here with sleds.

Lic'ae kaen' xona Tsae Baa Na' ts'enevel.
We camp with dogs then at 'Gray Stone Creek' (Bartell Creek).

Xona yes kats'edel ts'en' xu.
Then we go up on the snow (crust).

C'aan 'aede tah yes kats'edel tah.
In times of starvation we go up on the snow.²

Yet xa'aat Men Tac'iltende ts'enevel.
We camp at the next place over at 'Where Game Trails Go among Lakes' (Mineral Lake).

Ghayet ts'en Tsa' Kaen' Gha ts'enevel.
From there then we camp at 'By the Beaver Lodge' (creek into upper Little Tok River from east).

Yu cu nits'enaes 'eli' ts'il dzaenn.
We stop there not even for one day.

Nildenta 'alts'eni gistaann gaa ts'enevel.
Sometimes we camp five or six days.

Luxac'ehdelyis.
We go around hunting in a group.

Ndaannde denugi zelghaesde, ye su Tsa' Kaen' Gha cu denugi ghadghaande,
Wherever a moose is killed, if perhaps at 'By the Beaver Lodge' some moose are killed.

² When the late winter snow cover thaws during the day and refreezes at night, a crust is formed, making overland travel easier, giving hunters an advantage when pursuing moose or caribou.

yet nduux c'a c'etsen' tazes t'aax ts'elggün yet cu ts'edelts'ix.
we dry meat in a tent there for a while and stay there.

Yihwts'en ba'aa Isits'enn' Zdlaa Na' yet cu yet cu kets'udel.
From there we pass 'Creek Where There Are Skulls' (Moose Creek toward Tetlin) there on the other side.

Yihwts'en kaek'ae ts'en' xona Isa' Kaen' Gha nints'edel.
From there, then (going) toward home we stop again at 'By the Beaver Lodge'.

Xona 'unggat Taghes Yü Ts'edimilen Na' 'unggot utl'aax gha cu yet nits'enaes.
Then up from 'Creek That Flows Out of Cottoncwoods' (Little Tok River), we stop there at the headwaters.

Yet cu nduuy c'a xay su xay ne'el kozet.
There we spend time part of the winter.

Yet su xona daan' gha xona ba'aa yet Taghes Yü Ts'edimilen Na' nits'edel ts'en'.
Then in the spring we stop out there at 'Creek That Flows Out of Cottoncwoods'.

Men Tlets yet cu nduuy c'a ne'el kozet.
We also spend time there at 'Blue Lake' (Indian Pass Lake).

Xona yihwts'en xona c'etsen' zggan' 'el stedel ts'en'.
Then starting out from there with dry meat.

Kolgiis Na' nggadze ts'ents'edel gaa Mendaesde xona nastedel ts'en'.
we come back out from above 'Kolgiis Creek' (Bear Valley Creek) and we return here to 'Shallows Lake Place'.

Xona Tacdlaxa xudaadze nastedel.
Then we come back from downriver at 'Fish Spawning Place' (Mable Creek flats).

Xona Tacdlaxa xona all c'etsen' linacen natsch naskolyiis.
Then we relayed all the meat ahead of us to 'Fish Spawning Place'.

Kaek'e minats'edel xona hwdli k'edze'.
We got back home then on the spring crust.

(6)

Mendaesde ts'en' xona nahluu tah xona 'utsit Nataelde stsiye ghida'de
From 'Shallows Lake Place' then in the fall down by the (Copper) river at 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batziulnetas) where my grandfather was staying.

yen ts'en' xona stedel.
then we went to him.

Yihwts'en xona nin'ta htudaeli gha.
From there then they would go out into the country.

Mendaesde ts'en' 'utsit Tsik'ohtsedl Na' ts'enevel.
From 'Shallows Lake Place' we camped down at 'Small Fish Creek' (Suslositna Creek).

Yihwts'en xona Sasluuggu' xugha ts'edel ts'en'
From there we go to them at 'Small Salmon' (Suslota) and

denae yet hdelts'iinn 'iinn gha ts'edel.
we would go to the men (leaders) staying there.

Yen 'iinn gha ts'edel.
We would go to them.

Yihwts'en nduuy c'a nadaegge yihts'en xona Nataelde yet ts'ets'edel.
From there then we would come to 'Roasted Salmon Place' in about two days.

Xona yet ts'en xona lecents'edel xu ts'eneltaets ts'en' nin'ta stedel ts'en'.
Then we would gather together there and we would sleep and then we would go out into the country.

Unggat Ts'abael K'edigha yet xona ts'enevel.
Then we camped up at 'By the One with Spruce on It' (hill east of Batzulnetas).

Yidi c'a ts'ulcuudi cu c'ekol ts'en'.
If whatever (game) we tried to catch was absent.

xuk'a kets'udel ts'en' 'unggat Tanaadi Menn' gha ts'enevel.
then we would pass by and camp up at 'Moving Water Lake' (Tanada Lake).

Yet c'a cu c'ekol ts'en' ye cu yae' kuz'aan ts'en'.
If there was nothing there, if it was the same situation.

yet kets'udel ts'en' 'unggat Ledidlende yet xona ts'enevel.
we passed there, and up at 'Where Streams Join' (Goat Creek) then we camped there.

Yet xona hdelts'iix ts'en' debae keghiix.
Then they stay there and kill sheep.

Hyiggiin.
They would dry it (sheep meat).

Xona yet ts'en ts'ets'edel ts'en'.
Then they start out from there and

'ungge Ts'akae Ggan Nats'ilbaalde keniide yet kets'udel.
we pass where they call it 'Where the Thin Lady Was Lowered on a Rope' (creek off of Tanada Peak).³

Ts'ilt'en' Kats'etses Na' ye c'a kets'udel.
We also pass 'We Lift Up a Bow Creek' (Pass Creek).⁴

Yihwts'en ka'aat Tsic'elggodi Na' yet xona cu hdelts'iix.
From there then they stay out at 'Rock Is Chipped Creek' (upper Jacksina Creek).

³ See chap. 18, note 7.

⁴ See chap. 18, note 8.

Yihwts'en xona da debae 'uka nahtedihi.
From there then they would go for sheep.

Yik'a xona debae deggiinn.
Then sheep are dried.

Yihwts'en xona ts'ekedel ts'en' xona ba'en 'el
From there then they come out on the other side and

Gguun' Tsaan' Na', yet xu'en kadel ts'en
to 'Monster Excrement Creek' (Monte Cristo Creek), there they go to the other side and

ba'aa Nabaes Na' T'faat huu gha yet xona ye c'a lecenkededel.
out there by 'Nabaes River Headwaters' (Nabesna River headwaters) by the glacier they
would also get together.⁵

Datsiidze Nabaes Na' t'aenn 'iinn yen 'el ts'ilden lecenketdel ts'en'.
They would get together by the river with the Nabesna River people.

Yet t'ae' xu'el nakok'asde.
Just when it began to get cold there.

xona 'uniidze Nabaes Na' ts'enkedel ts'en' xona Desuun' Na'
then they came back down 'Nabaes River' and then at 'Good Area Creek' (Jack Creek)

ye caegge ninkedel.
they stopped at its mouth (at Nabesna Bar).

Yitah xona nif'el hdelts'iix.
Then they stayed there with them.

Yihwts'en xona 'uniidze nahtediil.
From there they started back down river.

Tadinilts'aegge Menn' yet xona nahnedel.
Then they spent another night at 'Narrow Water Lake' (Jack Lake).

Yihwts'en ts'enkedel ts'en' xona Nataelde nakedel.
From there they come back out and they return to 'Roasted Salmon Place'.

Ts'igge' ninkedel.
They stopped back at home again.

Yihwts'en sta' 'iinn du' nduuy c'a de'el ts'inidaegge 'iinn 'el nahnedel ts'en'.
From there, my father's people would camp again somewhere with his relatives.

Xona 'utsiidze Sasluuggu' cu nakedel ts'en' yet nif'el nahdelts'iix.
Then they would go back from the river to 'Small Salmon' (Suslota) and they would stay
together there again.

⁵ The system of passes from the Copper River to the upper Nabesna River is described by Rohn (1900: 782):
From Batzulnetas a good trail leads about ten miles in a southeasterly direction. It there forks into
three branches, leading by three different passes to the Nabesna River.
Another description of these trails, with maps, is in Mendenhall and Schrader (1903: 31).

Yet ts'en xona 'utsndze nahtedel ts'en' Kolgis Cagge nahnedel.
From there then they would return from the river and camp at 'Kolgis Mouth' (mouth of Bear Valley Creek).

Yet ts'en xona 'udaa' Tacdlaxa yet nahnedel.
From there then they camped again downriver at 'Fish Spawning Place' (Mable Creek flats).

Yihwts'en gaa nakedel ts'en' ts'igge' ninkededel.
From there, they would come back here and they would stop at home again.

(7)

Xona ma'en Tezdien ts'en' gaa ts'en stedel.
Then we go from here over to 'Swift Current' (Tetlin).

Gaa Tsae Baa Na' kets'udel.
We pass 'Gray Stone Creek' (Bartell Creek) here.

Is'abael Nilaenn Na'.
'Creek Where There Are Spruce' ('Snooshoe Creek,' three miles north of Bartell Creek).

Iatsaan' Fox c'a kets'udel.
and 'Raven's Nest' (mountain near Mineral Lake) we also pass.

Men Tac'iltende ve xona ts'enevel.
We then camp at 'Where Game Trails Go among Lakes' (Mineral Lake).

Yihwts'en Ismiggedzi Taax ts'en da'en C'edzagha' Na' ts'en'
From there to 'Beneath Twisted Head' (mountain west of Mineral Lake) and over to 'Ear Creek' (Trail Creek) and

C'edzagha' Na' dzet kats'edel.
we climb the mountain on 'Ear Creek'.

Xona 'unggat C'edzagha' Na' T'laat yet ts'enevel.
Then we camp up there at 'Ear Creek Headwaters' (upper Trail Creek).

Yihwts'en xona ba'en C'edzagha' tes'en ts'endel.
From there we go over the pass to the other side at 'Ear' (mountain 5440' north of Trail Creek).

Men deltux, Tezdien Menn'.
The lake is there, 'Swift Current Lake' (Tetlin Lake).

Utgat ubaagha ts'ets'edel ts'en' xona.
We then come out up above on its shoreline.

Udaa'a ubaagha men delcaax ts'en'
Down from the shoreline the lake is large and

'udaa'a ubaagha daa' nildenta ubaagha ts'enevel
sometimes we camp down from the shore.

Xona 'udaat Nalk'edze keniide, yet xona kaek'ae yet ts'edel.
Then down where they call it 'Nalk'edze' (Last Tetlin), then we come home there.

Yihwts'en nduuy c'a koht'aenn 'el ts'enevel ts'en'.
From there, after staying awhile with the people.

xona xona 'utsiit Tezdlende keniide yet xona yet cu ts'ets'edel.
then down by the water where they call it 'Swift Current Place' (Tetlin), then we come out there.

Yet xona denae ye ta snehyaann 'iinn, xu'el ts'imidaegge 'iinn, yudelkani 'iinn.
There, then, are the men who raised me, and their siblings, and their maternal relatives.

Yen 'iinn xu' hdaghalts'e' ts'en' xon 'iinn de'uta nahtedel.
They used to stay there and they used to be glad to see them.

Xu'el xu'el hdelts'ix.
They used to stay with them.

Yet xona yet xona 'unae'e xona K'estsiigge xuxedi'a'de
Then upriver from there, then where they call it 'Outlet' (Northway).

'unit Northway K'estsiigge yet ts'en' xona nahtedelde.
then they go back upriver to Northway, 'Outlet'

Yet c'a nduuy c'a hneyel ts'en' xona Nabaes Na' tsidze xona nahtedel.
They camp there a while, too, and then they return from the lowlands up 'Nabaes River' (Nabesna River).

Nabaes Na' tsidze yihwts'en xona gha Iset'aniledzi kulniyi.
From the lowlands (they go) up 'Nabaes River', from there to where they call it 'Out Beneath Rock (?)' (Jimmu Broken Lake).

xu nahtedel tatsigi.
they return to 'Ochre Water' (mountain on Nabesna River at Tatschonda Creek).

Yet xona 'unggat kaek'ae xona Nabaes Na' kaek'ae.
Then upland there at the home on the 'Nabaes River' (Nabesna Bar on Nabesna River).

de'el ts'imidaegge 'iinn yen 'iinn cu nduuy c'a nahnedel.
with their siblings they would camp again for a while.

Yihwts'en nahtedel ts'en' xona Desuun' Na'
From there they would start back and then up 'Good Area Creek' (Jack Creek).

tsidze kankedel ts'en' 'unit Iadinilts'aegge yet nahnedel.
they would come up from the river and they would camp upriver at 'Narrow Water' (Jack Lake).

Yihwts'en Nataelde.
From there (they would go to) 'Roasted Salmon Place' (Batzihietas).

Yihwts'en xona gaa duu tsidze nahtedel.
From down there they would come back toward here.

'Utsit Tsik'ohstedl Na' yet nahnedel ts'en' Tacdlaxa.
They camp again down at 'Small Fish Creek' (Suslostina Creek) and 'Fish Spawning Place' (Mable Creek flats).

Yet ts'en xona gaa cu ts'igge' cu ninkededelde.
From there, then they come back home here.

Nac'ehwdezet ts'en' ts'il saende dae' tko't'aexi 'el
And so time would pass and in one summer so it would be, and

yet cu ne'e k'ets'en nakalguus 'el nilkel'ix.
then the next spring would come and they would get together.

Niltahkenahnidel.
They made this round over and over.

(8)

Gaa ts'en xona Nondlae c'aann' c'a 'uka stedel ts'en' Slate Creek xonii ts'en'.
We would go from here for white people's food, to what is called 'Slate Creek'.

Yet ts'en' stedel.
We start toward there.

Dangge C'eggaann' Ts'enn' T'aa 'ungge stedel ts'en' C'eggaann' Ts'enn' Na' dzel
We go upland to 'Arm Bone Headwaters' (upper Bone Creek) and 'Arm Bone Creek' mountain (mountain north of Burnt Lake).

Dzaen niidze C'eggaann' Ts'enn' Na' ts'enevel.
We camp at 'Arm Bone Creek' in midday.

Sacaan ts'ents'edel 'ungga T'ogh Dinaez T'aat ts'enevel.
In the morning we start out again and camp up at 'Long Grass Headwaters' (creek into upper Bone Creek from west).

Yihwts'en T'ogh Dinaez Dzele' tes ts'edelde.
From there, when we go over the pass at 'Long Grass Mountain' (mountain at head of 'Long Grass Creek').

ba'en tes stedel ts'en' Una' Tuu Koley Na' kets'udel.
we go over the pass to the other side and pass by 'Creek That Has No Water' (Dry Tok Creek).

'Unaa Cen K'enaak keniide yet xona ts'enevel.
We camp across there at what is called 'Mineral Lick on the Flat' (bar on upper Tok River).

Yet ts'en xona luxac'ehdelyaes.
From there then we go hunting in a group.

Yii c'a debae deghiix tah.
Whenever some sheep are killed,

xona yii sacaan Una' Tuu Koley Na' ngge'
that morning we go up from 'Creek That Has No Water'

Slate Creek hwdine'den tes ts'edel bayggat.
and over the pass to what is called Slate Creek, down below.

St'aa Na' luu gha yet ts'enevel.
We camp by the 'Rear River' glacier (Slana Glacier).

Yihwts'en xona Tsiis Tl'edze' Tlaat 'enta ba'en kats'edel ts'en'.
From there we go over the pass to the other side to 'Blue Ochre Headwaters' (upper Chistochina River).

Xona kayggat Kaltsogh Na' keniide yet kets'udel ts'en'.
Then we pass the next place below, what is called 'Yellow Area Creek' (creek into Chistochina River east of glacier) and

ba'en dzet tes ts'edel ts'en' xona Slate Creek ts'edel.
we go over the mountain pass to the other side and then we come to Slate Creek.

Yet xona Slate Creek xona c'aan ts'unes.
Then we get food there at Slate Creek.

C'etsen' 'el 'en stelaes.
We would sell meat.⁶

Ye dzaennde 'ele' lzaasi c'ile'de.
In those days there was no money.

Fifty cents a pound c'a meat nlaen.
Meat was (worth) fifty cents a pound.

Yii c'a big money ghile'.
That was big money.

Yet cu xona tsaey 'el c'aan 'el k'a'tse' 'el xudekiit.
Then they bought tea and flour and bullets with it.

Xona kaek'ae nahtedel ts'en' k'adii Kaltsogh Na' yet nahnedel.
Then they started back home and then they would camp again at 'Yellow Area Creek'.

Yihwts'en Saas K'eti'itaande nahnedel.
From there they camped at 'Where the Trail Goes on Sand' (bar on Slana River four miles above Jack Creek).

Xona 'unggadze Cec'elts'etl Na' yet ghanxudel ts'en'.
Then they came down through 'Curved Tail Creek' (Jack Creek) and

Ndleni Na' ghaaghe ghanxudel.
they went through near 'Swift Creek' (Lost Creek).

⁶ Hunting game to sell meat to the mining camps brought a major change in the Native economy after 1898. These economic changes are discussed in Strong 1972: chaps. 5-6.

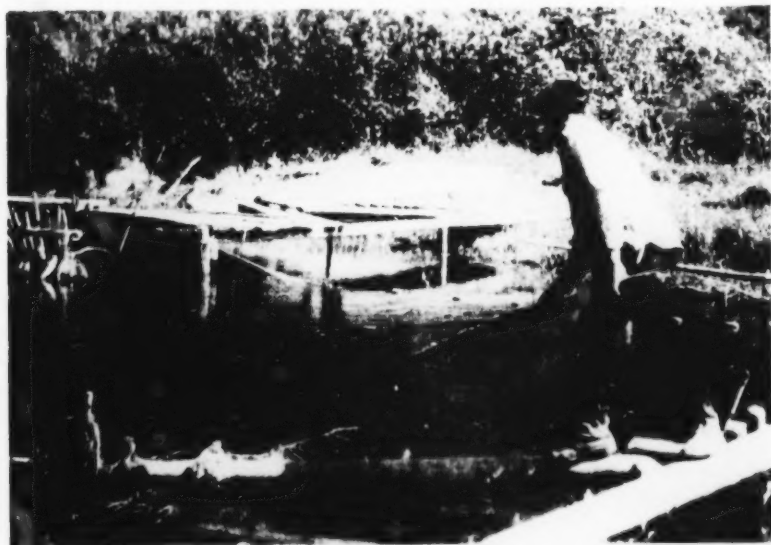
C'eggaann' ts'enn' Na' nahnedel.
They camped again at 'Arm Bone Creek' (Bone Creek).

Yet ts'en sacaan 'el xona 'unggadze nahtedel.
From there they started back down in the morning.

Xona ts'igge' ninkedel kanaa Mendaesde.
Then they stopped again at home across there at 'Shallows Lake Place' (Mentastat).



Jack John Justin's cabin on the Nabesna River, 1954. Left to right: Daisy Jack Justin, Fred John, Howard Sanford, Sarah Nickolai, Jack John Justin, Lena Charley, Calvin Justin, Rosie Nickolai, Wilson Justin. Photo courtesy of Bell Ice.



Lake Butler fishing for salmon at Old Mentasta, 1954. Photo by Don Galbreath.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

207

216

20
Naabia Tl'aat¹
Upper Nabesna River

Jack John Justin

Jack John Justin is the son of Nabesna John (of Upper Nabesna), and Long Lucy Charley (of Mentasta). He speaks both Upper Tanana and Ahtna, and is the last older generation member of the Ddhal Tot'iin ('Among the Mountains People') who has maintained year-round residence on the upper Nabesna River. Jack was born at Chisana in 1906. His family moved back and forth between Mentasta, White River, and Tazamona Lake (in Canada) in those days. In 1912 he lived at Tl'oh Gaihk'e, 'On the White Grass' (North Fork Island village), on the upper White River. At that time some people still lived in traditional houses and boiled food by placing hot rocks in baskets. His family did not put up large food caches, but kept traveling, hunting for meat.

Jack is well-known for his detailed knowledge of the geography, prehistory, and history of the entire region, from Chistochina and Mentasta, to the eastern slope of the Wrangell Mountains, (the Nabesna, Chisana, and White rivers) to the upper Chitina River. He has recorded over 200 Upper Tanana and Ahtna place names in this area. Jack is also known as one of Alaska's most talented Athabaskan dancers.

The following passages on Nabesna River geography are selected from tapes I recorded with Jack in 1982 and 1983. For further information on Nabesna-Chisana history and geography see the detailed comments in Reckord 1983:213-241, which are based on interviews with Jack John Justin, Laura Hancock, Ruby Sinyon, and Wilson Justin, as well as several published sources.

From *Ttheetsq' Tl'aat*² ('Copper Headwaters', upper Chisana River) my grandfather, Old Justin,³ went down over to *Taghael*, ('Dike in Water', Taral village near Chitina).

He stayed about one month.

He came back from there.

He got married.

He came home for honeymoon.

That was Grandma Justin.

Then Grandma, I guess, went back down to Chitina just one time since then.

And she never go back down again till she die in Chisana in 1934 or 1935.

Old age.

This here, *Dehsq' Cheeg* ('Good Area Mouth', mouth of Jack Creek, locally called "Nabesna Bar"), is the new village.

All the grocery store (were) on this side of the Nabesna River.

¹ This is the Upper Tanana name for the upper Nabesna River. The name in Ahtna is *Nabaes Tl'aat*. The meaning of *naabia-nabaes* is not certain. It may refer either to the root *bia-baes* 'stone' or to *bia-baes* 'cook by boiling'.

² Places in Upper Tanana territory are written in the Upper Tanana writing system with these modifications: *dh*, *th*, *th'* are here written *ddh*, *tth*, *tth'*.

³ Jack John Justin notes that the personal name Justin comes from a Canadian Athabaskan word *ajast'ih* meaning a 'good worker'.

We can't wade across this river.

So we put up this village.⁴

This Platinum Creek, *Dil'aan Cheeg* ('Hawk Mouth'), was a village way before white people came in.

That's old-timer people.

They don't even hear or speak English or nothing.

And here is *Daxuhtqg Cheeg* ('Flat-Topped Mountain Mouth'), at mouth of Camp Creek.

This is stampede day, 1913-14.

Village started in 1901, I guess.

That's what my dad told me.

And *Tthiixqg Cheeg* ('Brain Mouth', Cooper Creek mouth village) that's Charley Toby's great-great-grandpa start that village.

So when my daddy was young, he went down there and start a little cabin.

And pretty soon everybody start to build cabin.

Eight cabin altogether.

I got big cabin there, too.

When I grew up to man I start to build a cabin.

So Johnny Nickolai, he burn 'em down all.

He make tea outside and grass caught on fire.

He never put out fire and he left it.

So whole village, all cache, dog house, nothing saved.

It happened 1943-44, I think.

They call it (Cooper Creek) *tthiixqg* 'brain' 'cause when you use the brain (solution in skin tanning) it look like milk.

The water looks like that color.

Cooper Creek is the only good pass to Chisana.

There are two trails.

One go by lake (Blue Lake) is the summer trail.

One (to the south) is the winter trail.⁵

Soda Creek, *Ch'enaak Ndiign* ('Mineral Lick Creek', into upper Platinum Creek) is a hunting area, winter and summer.

They stay there.

Winter coming, sheep quit drinking soda, they off there.

Summertime we use Stone Creek, *Tonthuut Ndiign* ('Water Pipe Creek'), for hunting.

Pass going over that way to *Ch'enaak Ndiign* (also called 'Mineral Lick Creek',

Antler Creek).

Pass going over other way, too, to *Taatthee Ndiign* ('Rock Water Creek', Stuver Creek).

This is a summer pass.

Don't go winter.

Danger, snow slides, both sides steep hill.

So winter coming, no more use it.

⁴ Jack built his cabin here in 1944.

⁵ Nabesna John, Jack's father, reported this same set of locations to McKennan in 1929.

Upper Chisana Upper Nabesna. This group hunted and trapped in the basins of the Chisana, Nabesna, and White rivers. A semipermanent camp had existed for many years in the Chisana Valley at the mouth of Cross Creek where a few families had winter cabins. The same group wintered on the Nabesna River where they were in 1929 when I camped with them. This camp stood on the east bank of the Nabesna River near the mouth of Cooper Creek. An earlier village two miles upstream, also on the east bank, was abandoned after the death of a powerful shaman, and the original village, of which no traces remain, was across the river at the mouth of Platinum Creek. Population 16" (McKenna 1959:17-18).

Taatsing Nadin ('Ochre Water Creek', Totschunda Creek) wintertime we use for hunting sheep.

The two special mountains for Nabesna people are *Taatsing* ('Ochre Water', mountains 7115' and 6910' on Nabesna River at Totschunda Creek), the happy face, and *Theet'aminikui* ('Out Beneath Rock', mountain 6790' east of Jimmy Brown Lake), the sad face.¹⁶

The last potlatch on Nabesna River, at the old village, was in 1918.

That Nabesna Glacier, *Nadinia Kiri*.
They don't go up glacier.
They don't hunt that country.
They just stay away from glacier.
Only far as they go is a little ways from glacier.
Up where it is good walking.

Since I was six years old I remember they go to *Tuu Chanih Nadin*, ('Water Flats Creek') (lower) Luck Creek for sheep hunting.

Then after they get through sheep hunting they move down to *D-zanih Kū Manh* 'Muskrat House Lake' (unnamed lake off Luck Creek near mouth of Alder Creek) and go hunt moose.

Then every year we do that except when I get job placer mining in Chisana and I don't come down for the summer.

But winter time for trap I go down there.

Use 'em for trap marten, lynx, wolverine, wolf, everything down there.

Last timber place, here we camp all through that big timber there.

We build cabin and cache down right in middle of big timber.

Creek cut through there (west channel of lower Alder Creek) and wash out all our little village there, you know.

Where Fred John talk about, that's another mile from there on down. Where he talk about.

That still show up yet, that camp.

Another one wash out.

Some Scottie Creek people come and winter with us there, too.

So I always like trapping down there.

Since nobody up here (on Upper Nabesna River) that why I trap a little here.

Too many people.

But Luck Creek is sure a good place to trap.

Good place to spend the summer, too.

[Had your father (Nabesna John), had he been there as a young man?]

Way before me, I guess.

He say this used to be our camp here.

Our living here used to be.

His cousin, Tommy Jackson, he build cabin there.

[Anyone else?]

¹⁶ These are sacred mountains—such as these referred to in Fred John's speech on page 20. Fred John refers to these mountains in his story in chap. 19. He pronounces place names in this paper Nabesna River names in Athabaskan. Fred John lists the pronounces them in Upper Tanana. This is a good example of how a village set at Athabaskan place name used to be a language boundary for regular adjustment of speech.

¹⁷ See chap. 13 where Fred John visits Jack John's father at Nabesna River and then travels to visit Nabesna John at the lower Luck Creek camp where he regularly hunts for luck.

Oh yeah, Uncle Billy used to come around there, too.
Uncle Joe (Chisana Joe) only one didn't stay there too much.
He like to go to Scottie Creek better.

[Jack draws a map and explains the features on it.]

Nabesna River, there's where we are now, must be 25 miles down here to Pickerel
Lake Creek, *Ts'ugh Ts'egg Ndiugn* ('Narrow Potato Creek').
And then about six, seven miles from there to up here, this fish camp (on lower
Lick Creek, *Tuu Chauli Ndiugn* 'Water Flats Creek').
Trail goes like this.
Then on up creek sometime we stay up here (on Alder Creek, *Ch'enaak Ndiugn*
'Mineral Lick Creek').
Sometime we stay down here (on Alder Creek).
Back and forth.
And now this (second place) is missing.
This (fish camp) no more show up here, either.
I think tailing gravel going on back through the timber.
This camp (due west of *Dzanli K'it Manli*, 'Muskrat House Lake') only one all right
yet.
So this is where I going to be.
From there is *Tuu Chauli Ndiugn* (lower Lick Creek).
I think the last time I was down there was 1961.
That was the last time.
So now I want to put up camp down there again.



Charley Lake's cabin and cache at *Men Tac'iltenden*, Mineral Lake, 1944. Photo by Don Galbreath.



The Wrangell Mountains, viewed from *K'ey Tsatugla*, 'By the Dwarf Birch' (Hogan Hill). The trail to Taral skirts the base of these mountains. Photo by University of Alaska Geophysical Institute.

21
Taghael dze' Tene
The Trail to Taral

Nicholas A. Brown

Nicholas (Andy) Brown, who is now about 92 years old, is probably the only living Ahtna who has walked the old trail between Taral and Batzulnetas on the Mount Sanford side of the Copper River. Andy is from Bes Cene, 'Base of the River Bank', Riverstag (or Liebestag) village on the west bank of the Copper River near Kenny Lake. Although Andy speaks Lower rather than Upper Ahtna, his story complements the upper Copper River travel narratives in this book in that it demonstrates the close ties among the Ahtna. This trail was first documented on the 1839 Wrangell map (see p. 104).

*'Adii Nataelde desniide.
Now I speak of 'Roasted Salmon Place'.*

*Yet ts'inidaetne tene kughil'aen' danaaxe yae'.
The people who left from there had a trail over on the other side (of the Copper River).*

*Gha yet Kateni Na' xuhwk'a tighita'.
There was a trail on 'Creek That Trail Ascends' (Drop Creek or an upper tributary of Drop Creek).*

*Hwniidi K'elt'aeni udetniyi yet t'aaghe niidze tene kughil'aen'.
At the one they call 'Upriver K'elt'aeni' (Mount Sanford), they had a trail beneath there coming from upriver.*

*'Unit Ts'itael Na' hwniiden yet naane k'ehghidel.
Up there they cross upper 'River That Flows Straight' (Sanford River).*

*Yet danaaxe yae' xona kadeldze' 'adii 'adii Kolghosi Na' cu yet k'ehghidel.
Going across there, now there they come to 'Boiling Creek' (Klawasi Creek).*

*Yae' kadaaxe ldu' xona Hwniidi Na' yae' k'ehghidel.
The next place downriver they come to is there at 'Upriver Creek' (Nadina River).*

*Tene kughile' all the way tinitaan kughile'.
There was a trail; the trail went all the way.*

*Hwdaadi Na' cu k'ehghidel.
They also come to 'Downriver Creek' (Dadina River).*

*Kadaaxe yeldu' Tsitsox Na' cu yet k'ehghidel.
The next place downriver they come to is 'Yellow Head Creek' (Chichokna River).²*

¹ This sentence was added by Katie John.

² The next four sentences were inserted by Andy Brown after the original tape recording of this story was made.

Yet cu Ts'itazdlen Na' k'ehghidel.
There also they come to 'Straight Swift Stream' (Chestaslina River).

Yet hwts'en daa' Bes Cene xuhwk'a tighita'.
From there the trail led down to 'Base of the River Bank' (Riverstag village on the west bank of the Copper River).

Gha yet Ts'itazdlen Na' beyudileni
There is a stream there flowing into 'Straight Swift Stream'

yet c'a Tatl'ahwt'aene Kaltende dae' key'dighi'a'.
that they have named 'Where the Headwaters People Had a Trail Ascending'.³

Cu yet k'ehghidel kadaaxe ts'idinileni,
They also come down to the one flowing out.

Isezuuh Na' ggalaay nu' kadinileni k'ent'aey.
'Pipe Rock River' (East Fork of Chestaslina), the one that seems to be flowing up and out of a hole in the mountain.

Yet Isezuuh Na' k'ehghidel.
They come there to 'Pipe Rock River'.

Yihwts'en xona kadaaxe Idu' xona Tsesnen' Na' Tsesnen' Na' yet k'ehghidel.
From there then down to 'Copper Chisel Creek' (Cheshnima River) they come to 'Copper Chisel Creek'.

Yet hwts'en 'udaaxe Nekedezdleni Na' yet k'ehghidel.
From there they come down to 'Creek That Flows in an Arc' (either Elliot Creek or stream into Kotsina River from the south).⁴

Yihwts'en kadaaxe Cedidzaasi Na' k'ehghidel.
From there they come to 'Bushy Tail Creek' (location unknown or Dudina Lake outlet stream).

Yet ts'en 'udaa' K'ats'i Na' hwniidi k'ehghidel.
From there they come to upper 'Cold Creek' (Kotsina River).

Yet xona 'Atna' yehwts'en 'udaa' Taghaelde Idu' xona maadze ts'en kenakedel.
Then they come from 'Atna' (Copper River) and they get back downriver to 'Dike in Water' (Tarai) coming from the other side.

Yet 'unaaxe daa' tighita'.
Across and downriver (on the west bank of the Copper River) from there was a trail.

Yeldu' Taghaelde xona ye k'ehghidel.
Then they reached 'Dike in Water Place'.

³ This is one of the more interesting and significant Aitna place names. It shows that the trail described here at the base of the mountains was a special travel corridor for the Upper Aitna. See Reckord 1983:129 on the Bes Cene village site.

⁴ Either this place name and the following one were previously unrecorded, or Andu has gotten the sequence slightly out of order. See Kari 1983:11-12.

Dae' nen' hghil'a'.

*This was the country that they depended upon.*⁵

Xona key'ghikos.

Then they went downriver in boats.

Cenuu kekos Nic'a'skaesde.

They went in boats at 'Where We Launch Boats' (site on east bank of Copper River below Tenas Creek).

Ya'aadi yet ts'en nic'ahghikaes.

Out from there they set out in boats.

Xona yeldu' nic'ahghikaes nadaat Ts'akaey Nanalyaesde.

Then they set out paddling downriver to 'Where the Women Are Carried Across' (site on west bank above Haley Creek).

Hwnuudi Ts'akaey Nanalyaesde yet danaane ts'akaey nanaghalyaes.

Upriver from 'Where the Women Are Carried Across', there the women used to be carried across the river.⁶

'Unaaxe nae' Taghael 'udaadze xu' cu tighita'.

Across and upriver the trail from downriver led to 'Dike in the Water' (Taral).

Cu yae' nakadel.

They would walk back that way.

Ye cu 'udaa' u'el ts'estniigi.

*I don't know downriver from there.*⁷

⁵ Andy Brown is referring to the importance of the entire trail system, from Nataekde (Batzaletas) to Taghael (Taral) on the Wrangell Mountains side of the Copper River. There is additional documentation on this trail in West 1973:36 who quotes Bell Joe and Frank Stickum: "A trail ran from Chitna all the way up to Batzaletas going through the head of the Sanford River and all the creeks. It continued to Sieslota, over to Tetlin, and eventually on to Dawson." Powell describes traveling on this trail in 1898 (1909:56). Reckord (1983:129) also refers to this trail.

⁶ Usually only the Ahlta men would go down through the dangerous canyons of the lower Copper River when they traded with the Eyak, Tlingit, and later, the Russians (at Nucheki) or the Americans (in the Cordova area).

⁷ Andy Brown means here that he had not made the journey by boat. He worked many years for the Copper-Northwestern Railroad, and he knows the Ahlta place names that extend down to the mouth of the Copper River into what was once the territory of the Eyak people. See Kari 1983:2-7 on Ahlta place names on the lower Copper River.

References

- Alaskana* 15 (1): 2 (December 1977) Publisher's Comment. Anchorage: F.S. Pettyjohn.
- Allen, Henry T. 1887. *Report of an Expedition to the Copper, Tanana, and Koyukuk Rivers in the Territory of Alaska in the Year 1885*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office. Reprinted in *The Alaska Journal*, 15 (2): 96 pp. insert bet. pp. 32-33. (Spring 1985.)
- Billum, John. 1979. *Atna' Yemda'a, Ahtna Stories*. Anchorage: National Bilingual Materials Development Center.
- Buck, Mildred and James Kari, comps. 1975. *Ahtna Noun Dictionary*. Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center.
- Castner, Joseph C. 1984. *Leutenant Castner's Alaskan Exploration, 1898*. Alaska Historical Commission Studies in History No. 125. Edited by Lyman L. Woodman. Anchorage: Cook Inlet Historical Society.
- Davidson, George. 1901. Explanation of an Indian map...from the Chilkat to the Yukon drawn by the Chilkat chief, Kohklux, in 1869. *Mazama* 2 (2): 75-82.
- Davydov, Gavriil I. 1977. *Two Voyages to Russian America, 1802-1807*. Materials for the Study of Alaskan History, No. 10. Edited and translated by Colin Bearne and Richard A. Pierce. Kingston: The Limestone Press.
- de Laguna, Frederica. 1972. *Under Mount Saint Elias: The History and Culture of the Yakutat Tlingit*. Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology No. 7. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- . 1975. Matrilineal Kin Groups in Northwestern North America. In *Proceedings: Northern Athapaskan Conference, 1971*, Vol. 1. Edited by A. McFadyen Clark. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada.
- de Laguna, Frederica and Catharine McClellan. n.d. The Atna. Ms. 103 pp. prepared for *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 6, *Subarctic*.
- . 1981. Ahtna. In *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 6, *Subarctic*. Pp. 641-64. Edited by J. Helm. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.
- Doroshin, Peter P. n.d. Doroshin, Russian Engineer, Prospected for Gold in Russian America, 1848-1858. Translated by unknown editor from "Diaries Kept in Russian America." *Gornyi Zhurnal* 3 (iii): 365-400, 1866. Ms.
- Gillespie, Beryl. 1981. Nahani. In *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 6, *Subarctic*. Pp. 451-54. Edited by J. Helm. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.
- Guédon, Marie-Françoise. 1974. *People of Tetlin, Why Are You Singing?* Mercury Series Paper 9. Ottawa: National Museum of Man, Ethnology Division.
- Hadleigh-West, Frederick. 1981. *The Archaeology of Beringia*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hanable, William S. 1982. *Alaska's Copper River, The 18th and 19th Centuries*. Anchorage: The Alaska Historical Society.
- John, Fred, Sr., and Katie John. 1973. The Killing of the Russians at Batzulnetas Village. *The Alaska Journal*, 3 (3): 147-8.
- Kari, James. 1983. *Ahtna Place Names Lists*. Joint publication of the Copper River Native Association and Alaska Native Language Center.
- . Forthcoming. *Ahtna Dictionary*. Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center.
- Kerttula, Anna M. 1984. *Ahtna-Russian Contact in Oral Tradition, A Methodological Treatise*. Ms., Dept. of Anthropology, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

- Ketz, James A. 1983. *Paxson Lake, Two Nineteenth Century Ahtna Sites in the Copper River Basin, Alaska*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Anthropological and Historic Preservation, Cooperative Park Studies Unit.
- Ketz, James A. and Katherine L. Arndt. 1985. The Russian-American Company and the Development of the Alaskan Copper River Fur Trade. Paper presented at Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, Montreal, May 1985.
- McClellan, Catharine. 1975. *My Old People Say: An Ethnographic Survey of Southern Yukon Territory*. Part 1. Publications in Ethnology 6. Ottawa: National Museum of Man.
- McKenna, Robert A. 1959. *The Upper Tanana Indians*. Yale University Publications in Anthropology No. 55. New Haven.
- McKenna, Robert A. 1981. Tanana. In *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 6, *Subarctic*. Pp. 562-577. Edited by J. Helm. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.
- Mendenhall, Walter C. 1905. *Geology of the Central Copper River Region, Alaska*. U.S.G.S. Professional Paper 41. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Mendenhall, Walter C. and Frank C. Schrader. 1903. *Mineral Resources of Mount Wrangell District, Alaska*. U.S.G.S. Professional Paper 15. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Mishler, Craig. Forthcoming. *Born with the River: An Ethnography and Ethnohistory of Alaska's Big Delta-Goodpaster Indians*. Anchorage: Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys.
- Olsen, Wallace and Ramon Vitt. 1969. Tree Paintings near Tok, Alaska. *Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska*. 14 (2): 77-85.
- Powell, Addison M. 1909. *Trailing and Camping in Alaska*. New York: Wessels and Bissell.
- Rainey, Froelich G. 1939. Archaeology in Central Alaska. *Anthropological Papers of American Museum of Natural History*. 36 (4): 351-405. New York.
- Reckord, Holly. 1983. *Where Raven Stood, Cultural Resources of the Ahtna Region*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Anthropological and Historic Preservation, Cooperative Park Studies Unit.
- Rice, J. F. 1900. From Valdez to Eagle City. In *Compilation of Narratives of Explorations in Alaska*. Pp. 784-790. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Rohn, Oscar. 1900. Trails and Routes. In *Compilation of Narratives of Explorations in Alaska*. Pp. 780-784. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Russian American Company Records. Correspondence of 1846-1850 translated by Katherine Arndt. Ms.
- Sherwood, Morgan B. 1965. *Exploration in Alaska, 1865-1900..* New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Shinkwin, Anne D. 1979. *Dakah De'nin's Village and the Dixthada Site: A Contribution to Northern Athapaskan Prehistory*. Archaeological Survey of Canada Paper No. 91. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada.
- Simeone, William E. 1982. *A History of Alaskan Athapaskans*. Anchorage: Alaska Historical Commission.
- Strong, Stephen B. 1972. An Economic History of the Athabaskan Indians of the Upper Copper River, Alaska, with Special Reference to the Village of Mentasta Lake. Unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, Montreal.
- Tansy, Jake. 1982. *Indian Stories, Hwt'saay Hwt'aene Yenida'a, Stories of Small Timber People*. Anchorage: National Bilingual Materials Development Center.
- Thompson, Chad. Forthcoming. *Russian Loan Words in Alaska*. Alaska Native Language Center Research Paper. Fairbanks.
- Tikhmenev, Peter A. 1978. *A History of the Russian-American Company*. Edited

- and translated by Richard A. Pierce and Alton S. Donnelley. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press.
- Twichell, Heath, Jr. 1974. *Allen, the Biography of an Army Officer, 1859-1930*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- West, Constance F. 1973. An inventory of trails and habitation sites in the Ahtna region. Ms., Williams College.
- Workman, William. 1977. Ahtna Archaeology: A Preliminary Statement. In *Problems in the Prehistory of the North American Subarctic: The Athapaskan Question*. Pp. 22-39. Edited by J.W. Helmer, S. Van Dyke, and F.J. Kense. Calgary: University of Calgary Archaeological Association.
- Wrangell, Ferdinand Petrovich. 1980. [1839] *Russian America: Statistical and Ethnographic Information*. Translated from the 1839 edition by Mary Sadouski and edited by Richard A. Pierce. Materials for the Study of Alaska History No. 15. Kingston: The Limestone Press.



BEST COPY AVAILABLE 428